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THE SWAN

A ROMANTIC COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

FERENC MOLNAR

TRANSLATED FROM THE HUNGARIAN

By MELVILLE BAKER

AN ACTING EDITION OF THE
AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION
ADAPTED AND ARRANGED TO BE PLAYED IN
THREE ACTS AND ONE SET

By NORMAN LEE SWARTOUT

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MOLNAR

THE SWAN

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FIRST EDITION

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Act of March 4, 1909.

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MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE DIRECTOR

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BECAUSE of the fundamental difference between the tasks of the player and the director, we have published a Director's Manuscript entirely separate from the Player's Book. It differs from the Player's Book in the following respects:

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But the Director's Manuscript is a complete producing text in every particular. It has been arranged wholly from the director's standpoint, and is intended only for his use. It contains the following additional information: Principles of acting and direction; all scene plots; property lists of each act; outline of lighting and stage effects; photographs of stage sets and characters; descriptions of characters; costumes, and make-up; and complete stage directions, reproducing utterly the entire action of the original professional performance. It is one of the most adequate play manuscripts ever offered. This Manuscript will be lent to amateurs free for the production, but must be returned immediately thereafter. It is valued at $5.00 and a corresponding charge will be made for its loss or destruction.

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THE SWAN

The first professional American production of THE SWAN, *under the management of Charles Frohman, Inc., was at the Detroit Opera House, Detroit, Michigan on October* 8, 1923. *It opened in New York at the Cort Theatre on October* 23, 1923, *was an instant success and ran through the season. In* 1924 *it was revived for another New York run at the Empire Theatre. The original cast follows:*

CHARACTERS

(*In the order of entrance.*)

DR. NICHOLAS AGI.....*Basil Rathbone*
GEORGE.....*Alan Willey*
ARSENE.....*George Walcott*
PRINCESS BEATRICE.....*Hilda Spong*
ALEXANDRA.....*Eva Le Gallienne*
FATHER HYACINTH.....*Halliwell Hobbes*
SYMPHOROSA.....*Alice John*
PRINCE ALBERT.....*Philip Marivale*
COLONEL WUNDERLICH.....*Henry Warwick*
COUNT LUTZEN.....*Carl Kalkhurst*
CÆSAR.....*Ritchie Ling*
MAID.....*Nancie B. Marsland*
PRINCESS MARIA DOMINICA.....*Alison Skipworth*
COUNTESS ERDELY.....*Geraldine Beckwith*
LADIES-IN-WAITING.....*Jane Shaw and Margaret Farr*
LACKEYS.....*Boswell Davenport and Tom Collins*
HUSSARS.....*Jack Cobb and Stanley Grand*

Staged by DAVID BURTON

ACT I. A room in the castle of PRINCESS BEATRICE. A summer afternoon.

ACT II. The same. Late that evening.

ACT III. The same. Early the next morning.

NOTE

The parts of the two young boys may be played by girls if more convenient. The play is frequently acted with success by an all-girl cast.

THE SWAN

ACT I

A mythical European Kingdom. The entire action of the play takes place in a room in the castle of PRINCESS BEATRICE. *During this act it is afternoon and the room is used as a study for the young Princes and their tutor,* AGI. *It is richly decorated with rare tapestries on the walls. There is a crystal chandelier hanging from ceiling and crystal bracket lights on side walls. There is a small table UC, and a longer one a little above C. Two chairs UR, two chairs UL, one chair DR, one chair back of table and one at each end. The larger table is covered with green baize and on it are books, papers, pencils, etc.*

There are doors DR and DL. French doors UR, now closed and concealed with curtains. A door at UL is also closed and covered with curtains. A flood of sunshine comes through a window on the right.

As the curtain rises PROFESSOR AGI *is discovered sitting back of long table C.* GEORGE *is seated at R and* ARSENE *at L end.*

AGI *is reading from a volume of history on the table before him. The boys are listening attentively.*

AGI. "But all this was nothing compared to the loneliness which he suffered—(*Curtain rises.*)—and so, after much bitter humiliation, he died on the island of St. Helena, the fifth of May, 1821, at the age of 52. There was a high promontory on which he had been accustomed to stand, looking out over the sea. There he was buried. His friends wished to engrave upon his tombstone, simply 'Napoleon,' but his enemy, the petty-minded Sir Hudson Lowe, persecuted him even beyond the grave. He permitted only the words, 'Le Général Bonaparte' to be inscribed. Later, however, Napoleon's ashes were conveyed with great pomp and ceremony to France, and now he rests in his magnificent tomb in the vast Dom des Invalides." (*He stops to look at his watch.*) Enough for today's lesson. (*Closes his book.*) Have your Highnesses any questions to ask? (GEORGE *rises, stretches.*)

ARSENE. You should have heard the argument we had with Mother last night—about Napoleon. She hates him; she says he was an upstart.

AGI. That depends on one's point of view.

GEORGE. How do you mean? (ARSENE *rises.*)

AGI. Your Highnesses have the right to form your own opinions. But it is my belief that Napoleon was one of the world's greatest geniuses. One who succeeded because he knew how to seize and

make the most of the opportunities which the Revolution cast at his feet.

GEORGE. You think he was a genius?

AGI. A great genius.

GEORGE. Then, so do I.

ARSENE. Is that what you call forming your own opinion?

GEORGE. It *is* my opinion. I can't help it if it's the professor's, too.

ARSENE. Mother was very angry.

AGI. With Napoleon?

GEORGE. Yes—and with you.

AGI. With me?

ARSENE. Because you haven't taught us to hate Napoleon.

AGI. But I have tried to give you an unprejudiced view of him.

ARSENE. That's what we told Mother, but she said "Napoleon was a man one couldn't be unprejudiced about."

GEORGE (*Sits R of table*). Particularly in our family. It was because of Napoleon that we lost our throne.

AGI. With all respect to the opinion of your Highness, I think you exaggerate when you say that. Napoleon had no direct part in the political history of your noble house. It was the King of Wurtemburg who . . .

GEORGE. But I thought you told us the King of Wurtemburg was just a tool of Napoleon's.

AGI. Perhaps—but all that is not important. What

I have been trying to point out is—that a family which has lost its throne is the very one to be inspired by Napoleon's example. He demonstrated that thrones are attainable. And if the son of a simple lawyer could do that, think how one whose noble birth . . .

GEORGE. But Mother said . . .

ARSENE. Mother is rather touchy about thrones now that Prince Albert is here.

GEORGE. Prince Albert is a real heir-apparent—and when Mother sees one of those, she can't eat.

ARSENE (*sits*). Poor Mother. Just because her great-grandmother had a throne of her own, Mother can't bear to think that *she* can never have one.

GEORGE. Never?

AGI. It's hardly likely—thrones are rather difficult to obtain these days.

ARSENE. But suppose the Prince marries Alexandra?

GEORGE. He won't.

ARSENE. How do you know he won't? If he does, we'll all be at the court because Alexandra will be Queen. And if I know Mother, the Prince will not be the one who does the ruling.

GEORGE. *If* he marries her.

ARSENE. He will.

GEORGE. Why should he?

ARSENE. Because Mother wants him to—all of us want him to. Aunt Symphorosa—Alexandra—I—and you—and the Professor.

GEORGE. I'm not sure I want him to, are you, Professor?

AGI (*Embarrassed*). Well, her Highness would grace the most exalted position.

GEORGE. Yes, I know—but you don't want her to marry him, do you?

AGI. Why do you say that?

GEORGE (*Imitating him*). Well, the way you said—"Her Highness would grace the most exalted position."

AGI. It—comes as rather a surprise to me. I can hardly grasp the idea all at once. Since—it has been my good fortune to be with your family, her Highness, your sister, has been very gracious to me—to all of us. And then besides I have been allowed to instruct her in fencing. When I try to realize, so suddenly, that my pupil is to become a bride—and a queen—well, I find it rather difficult.

GEORGE (*Rises, goes to back of chair*). I shall be sorry to leave this place. Everyone has been so nice to us. But you'll be coming with us, won't you?

AGI. If I am asked to.

ARSENE (*Rising L of table C*). It won't be so bad and maybe politics will keep Mother so busy, we'll be left to ourselves.

(BEATRICE *and* ALEXANDRA *enter.* AGI *stands up. The Boys come to front of table.*)

BEATRICE. You have finished your lessons? You are through early, are you not?

(ALEXANDRA *stands silent and motionless down R.*)

AGI. Yes, your Highness. We had arrived at Napoleon's death ten minutes before the end of the hour. We hardly had time to begin another chapter. That seemed to me a convenient stopping place.

BEATRICE (*Sharply*). A stopping place?

AGI. So it seemed to me, your Highness.

BEATRICE. A stopping place for him, perhaps; but for us merely a comma in an unfinished sentence. But that's not what I came to say. Arsene! George! Prince Albert is to visit you here. He is much interested in your studies, and has expressed the wish to talk to you about them—particularly your history. So go now and wash your faces and comb your hair—and put on your other suits.

ARSENE. When is he coming?

BEATRICE. As soon as he wakes.

GEORGE. Is he sleeping?

BEATRICE. I said—as soon as he wakes. You might have guessed that he was sleeping.

GEORGE. I did guess it—that's why I asked.

BEATRICE. That will do. Arsene, I hear you have been coughing.

ARSENE. Only once or twice.

BEATRICE. Your Aunt Symphorosa distinctly said that you were *coughing.* Why was this not reported to me?

AGI. His Highness ate a green pepper this morning. He would not follow my advice in regard to re-

moving the fibre. That is why he coughed. I did not consider it serious enough to report.

BEATRICE. How could you know whether it was serious or not? You are not a physician. (*Turns.*)

GEORGE (*To Arsene*). That's what he gets for Napoleon.

BEATRICE (*Turns back*). What did you say?

GEORGE. Nothing, Mother; I only coughed.

BEATRICE (*To George*). And I hear that *you* were riding like a wild man this morning.

GEORGE (*Steps to her*). Did Aunt Symphorosa tell you that, too?

BEATRICE. Never mind who told me. The point is that you *were* riding like a wild man.

GEORGE. It was the horse that was wild.

BEATRICE (*To Agi*). Then why was it not reported to me that the horse was wild?

AGI. The horse was considered tame until his Highness mounted him.

BEATRICE. How could you know that? You are not the riding-master.

GEORGE. Then how could he report it?

BEATRICE. I was not speaking to you, sir. Arsene shall have a mustard-plaster applied to his throat this evening and, beginning tomorrow, you shall ride only Betty.

GEORGE (*Steps to her*). Betty! Why *are* you so good to me, Mother?

BEATRICE. That is enough from you, sir. (*Pause.* ALEXANDRA *turns away, sits.*) I have a surprise for you—although you don't deserve it.

ARSENE (*Steps to her*). What is it?

GEORGE. Yes—what is it?

BEATRICE. Guess.

ARSENE. Alexandra's going to be a Queen. (*A long and painful pause.* ALEXANDRA *turns away.*)

BEATRICE. Arsene! What are you saying? How dare you even think of such a thing. (*To* AGI.) I trust it is not you who has been putting these ideas into their heads?

AGI. Heaven forbid, your Highness.

BEATRICE. Who did give you the idea, then?

GEORGE. I did.

BEATRICE. And what made *you* think of it?

GEORGE. Nothing.

BEATRICE. What?

GEORGE. I thought of it myself. Now don't be angry, Mother. There are some things I can't help seeing.

BEATRICE. Believe me, if Prince Albert were not coming any minute, you would be severely punished. But the punishment can wait—and you may be sure you won't escape it. (*To* AGI.) You might have informed me that the boys were occupying their minds with such thoughts.

GEORGE. How could he? He's not one of the family.

BEATRICE. You are utterly impossible! (*Another painful pause.*) I may as well tell you the sur-

prise. In honor of Prince Albert's visit, your Uncle Karl arrived this morning.

GEORGE. Uncle Karl! This morning. Oh, that's wonderful!

ARSENE. Uncle Karl! That *is* a surprise! (*The boys throw their arms about each other.*)

BEATRICE. What little savages.

ALEXANDRA. But they are so fond of him, Mother. I was quite as happy myself to see him.

ARSENE. Maybe I'm not pleased, Professor. Why, he's the most wonderful man in all the world.

GEORGE. He used to be a Prince, but now he is in a monastery. You have to call him "Father Hyacinth." He is a monk—a real monk. He has a frock and a cowl and a—scapulary——

BEATRICE. But those are merely the outward trappings. . . . What really matters is that my brother has a mind of steel and a heart of gold.

GEORGE. He has that!

ARSENE. He renounced the world to enter the preceptory.

AGI. I have often heard of him.

GEORGE. Haven't you ever seen him?

AGI. I have not yet had that good fortune.

GEORGE. Well, you're going to now. We all are. Mother, you couldn't have brought us better news. Even if it had been that Alexandra and Albert . . .

ALEXANDRA. George!

BEATRICE. That settles it for you.

HYACINTH (*Outside*). Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Shh! Isn't that someone calling?

HYACINTH (*Off R—louder*). B-e-a-t-r-i-c-e!

BEATRICE. Yes, that's Hyacinth bellowing. He has such frightful manners.

GEORGE and ARSENE (*Start R*). Uncle Karl! (*They are about to rush off to meet him.*)

BEATRICE. You stay here. You wild Indians! I'll meet him myself—before he wakes up the Prince with his shrieking. (*She exits. Boys follow to door.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Seated, to* AGI). I believe Mother intended to tell you that his Highness wishes to see the boys fence after he has talked with them here.

AGI. As her Highness desires.

ALEXANDRA. I have already seen that the fencing hall is made ready. The boys are first to engage you with the foils and then each other with the sabres.

AGI. May I ask if you are to take part, Princess? (*Boys in door turn and hear.*)

ALEXANDRA. No. (*Pause.*)

GEORGE. Why not?

ALEXANDRA (*Coldly*). Because his Highness prefers to see you fence. Is the equipment in order?

AGI. Yes, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. How long will the boys and you require to prepare yourselves?

AGI. Ten or fifteen minutes will be sufficient.

ALEXANDRA. I ask because the programme is so crowded. From here his Highness will go with

me to inspect my rose-garden and from there to the fencing. The visit to the garden is to occupy about fifteen minutes.

AGI. I regret that your Highness is not to have an opportunity to display her skill with the foils.

ALEXANDRA. That was not intended when the programme was arranged. If I change my clothes, I shall have no time to show him the garden. So it has been arranged that only the boys fence.

AGI. May I, in all deference, inquire whether someone else might not as well accompany his Highness through the garden?

ALEXANDRA. Why do you ask that?

AGI. In that case your Highness would have time to change her costume.

ALEXANDRA. Why are you so anxious that I should fence?

AGI. I merely thought—it seemed to me that since your highness fences with such rare skill and grace and——

ALEXANDRA. And?

AGI. And someone else *could* just as well show off —could as well escort his Highness through the garden.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, no doubt.

AGI. Forgive me, Princess. It was the pride of the teacher that made me speak.

(GEORGE *turns to her.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Rising*). Your pride was not considered in arranging the programme. In any case, please allow me to take care of it.

AGI. As it pleases your Highness.

GEORGE. Please, may I say something?

ALEXANDRA. Well, what is it?

GEORGE. I think the Professor is right. (*He goes to the door as voices are heard. Enter* HYACINTH *and* BEATRICE. GEORGE and ARSENE *rush out to meet them.*)

GEORGE. Uncle Karl!

ARSENE. Uncle Karl! (*Rush to greet him, one on either side of him.*)

GEORGE. Uncle Karl! How long are you going to stay, Uncle Karl?

HYACINTH (*As they come*). Now, now. Not so boisterous.

BEATRICE. Savages!

GEORGE. How long are you going to stay?

HYACINTH. I have just arrived and you are asking me how long I am to stay!

ARSENE. But we want to know.

HYACINTH. What a time it is since I've seen you! (*His arms about them.*) Let me look at you. (*Pinching* ARSENE'S *cheek.*) There are healthy cheeks for you. (*Feeling* GEORGE'S *biceps.*) And strong, too.

GEORGE. How long are you going to stay?

ARSENE. Yes—how long?

HYACINTH. Not long, I fear. (*Goes to* AGI, *who bows deeply.*) I don't have to be told that this is your tutor, Dr. Agi, of whom I have heard such splendid reports. (*Shakes his hand.*) Beatrice writes very enthusiastically of you—so you see I

know all about you. Not only an excellent scholar but a first-rate sportsman as well. I understand you row and—fence——

GEORGE. And ride.

HYACINTH. Ride? Of course he does. And I am glad that you boys like him.

GEORGE. Indeed we do.

HYACINTH. And are you satisfied with your pupils, Professor?

AGI. Quite, your royal Highness.

HYACINTH. Not Highness. Only a humble servant of Christ.

AGI (*Bowing*). I beg your pardon, Father.

HYACINTH. No need to blush about it. I'll be embarrassed myself if you do. Well, I am sure we are going to understand each other. (*Shakes his hand again.*) I compliment you on your methods. Book-learning seasoned with sports—that's the right receipe.

BEATRICE (*Sits by* ALEXANDRIA). Karl is an incurable pedogogue. He is more interested in the teacher than the pupils.

HYACINTH. I think I understand what you mean, my dear. Nevertheless, some rainy day when we have nothing better to do, I'll explain to you why, for the sake of the children, we must begin by finding out what's in the teacher's head. Well, what have you learned today, boys?

ARSENE. We finished with Napoleon, and—(GEORGE *nudges* ARSENE. ARSENE *looks at* BEATRICE.) Oh!

HYACINTH. Mother doesn't like him, eh?

GEORGE. Last night we had an argument——

ALEXANDRA. George, it isn't necessary to go over that again.

HYACINTH. Why not? I should like to hear about it. What was the argument?

ARSENE. Well, according to Mother, we ought to hate Napoleon.

GEORGE. Particularly in our family.

HYACINTH (*To* AGI). And what do you think about it?

AGI. It has been my aim to present him from an impersonal point of view—without prejudice.

HYACINTH. Then you shall be presented before the Royal Historical Society as the eighth wonder of the world—the man who neither hates nor worships Napoleon.

GEORGE (*Clasps his arm.* ARSENE *steps down.*) He does worship him, but he doesn't like to say so.

HYACINTH. And why not?

AGI. Because I wish their Highnesses to form their own opinions of him. All that I have done is to point out to them his courage, energy, and resourcefulness.

HYACINTH. Then you have done just the right thing. If there ever was a family whose children could profit from the study of Napoleon's life, it is this one.

GEORGE. That's just what he said only a minute ago.

HYACINTH. That doesn't prove that we are right.

But at least we can have the comfort of being wrong together.

BEATRICE (*Rising*). Go now and get ready. (*To* HYACINTH.) We are expecting Prince Albert any minute.

HYACINTH. Then get along with you, boys. *Au revoir,* Professor. (AGI *bows, exits with the boys.* BEATRICE *follows to C.*)

BEATRICE. You and the professor may repeat each other a hundred times, but the fact remains that man was an upstart.

HYACINTH (*LC*). What man?

ALEXANDRA (*Seated R*). Mother never mentions his name.

HYACINTH (*Remembering*). Oh! I am sorry. I had forgotten that.

(SYMPHOROSA *enters.*)

BEATRICE. Well?

SYMPHOROSA. He is still sleeping.

HYACINTH. Who is sleeping?

BEATRICE. The Prince. (*To* SYMPHOROSA.) On which side is he lying?

SYMPHOROSA. Let me think. (*Thinks back.*) On his right side.

BEATRICE. Then he's not lying on his heart?

SYMPHOROSA. No, on his liver.

BEATRICE. Good—now go back, my dear—and don't let anything escape you.

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, my dear. (*Exit.*)

HYACINTH. Is Symphorosa the guardian angel of his dreams?

BEATRICE. Yes, she is in constant communication with his aide, Colonel Wunderlich, who is on duty at the keyhole.

HYACINTH. And that goes on all day?

BEATRICE. I must be informed of everything. He is my guest and that is no slight responsibility.

HYACINTH. And how long has this been going on.

BEATRICE. For four days.

HYACINTH. And how long does he remain here?

BEATRICE. He leaves tomorrow. That is why you should have come earlier. His sudden arrival found me without a man in the house to entertain him.

HYACINTH (*Sits*). I came as soon as I received your wire. . . . I find Albert quite changed. I only saw him for a few minutes when I arrived. He has become quite serious—affable——

BEATRICE. He is very—sympathetic.

HYACINTH. You have no idea how cordially he greeted me. He almost wept—he threw his arms about me, and kissed me half a dozen times. And so enthusiastic about his visit here. He seems to have fallen in love with all of you.

BEATRICE. That's just it.

HYACINTH. What do you mean?

BEATRICE (*Rising*). Dear, would you mind going into the garden for a little?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, Mother. (*Rises; exits.* BEATRICE *follows to door R.* BEATRICE *puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*)

HYACINTH. Well, what is it, my dear? Something has happened?

BEATRICE (*Sits by* HYACINTH). I didn't wish to speak of it before her. The trouble is—nothing has happened. Albert told you how much in love he was—with us all?

HYACINTH. Yes.

BEATRICE. In love with us all—but not with ALEXANDRA.

HYACINTH. What can you expect in three days?

BEATRICE. Not love perhaps—but at least he might show some signs of interest in my daughter—he might make some advances. And there's nothing we haven't done . . .

HYACINTH. Perhaps there are political reasons that prevent him from speaking.

BEATRICE. My dear Karl, at least give me credit for——

HYACINTH. Yes, I know you are the best-informed woman in all Europe.

BEATRICE. Oh, Karl, I have no illusions. I know they are considering us—Alexandra, that is—only because two or three reigning families whom they don't wish to offend have made simultaneous advances to them. The Czar wants him for Olga, Constantine's daughter. And Edward for Helen of England.

HYACINTH. Albert can't keep his heart to himself forever.

BEATRICE. Of course not. Rome is out of the question and he must marry someone.

HYACINTH (*Rises*). Perhaps he will go to Montenegro.

BEATRICE (*Rises*). I have thought of that. He is such a dutiful son—his mother dominates him absolutely. It was because of her that he set out to dispose of his heart. And if we let him get away, he will go straight to Montenegro. (*Handkerchief to her eyes.* SYMPHOROSA *enters.*) Well?

SYMPHOROSA. He stretched out one hand from under the bed-clothes.

BEATRICE. And then?

SYMPHOROSA. He drank his barley-water.

BEATRICE. Was his barley-water there?

SYMPHOROSA. I told you he drank it.

BEATRICE. I was afraid it wouldn't be. And then?

SYMPHOROSA. He turned over on the other side and went to sleep again.

BEATRICE. Thank you, my dear. (*Motions her away.*)

SYMPHOROSA. Don't mention it, my dear. (*Hastens off.*)

BEATRICE. Karl, you know that this marriage was the dearest wish of my husband. Indeed his great friendship for Albert's father sprang from that.

HYACINTH. No, that sprang from his heart.

BEATRICE. Perhaps. But he nourished it with the thought of this marriage. And now that they are both dead, the fulfillment of the dream rests with me. Oh, Karl, if I could be assured that my daughter was to have a throne, I would willingly die this minute.

HYACINTH. There's not much of Christian humility in that wish, Beatrice.

BEATRICE (*Sits*). Forgive me, Karl, but after three days of this, I am no longer myself. I know that he came because of Alexandra. But now that he is here, it is as if she didn't exist. And no word from his mother. If his intentions were serious, she would be here now. (*Weeps.*)

HYACINTH. Come, now, Beatrice.

BEATRICE. I told you I wasn't myself. And to think we have only one day more. This afternoon and this evening—if nothing happens by that time —why, then it will be the end of everything.

HYACINTH. No sign at all?

BEATRICE (*Rises*). Nothing at all—and you may be sure I have had my eyes open.

HYACINTH. Perhaps Alexandra——

BEATRICE. She is beautiful and clever—such dignity, such reserve. Her father, you know, always called her his swan. "My proud white swan," he used to say. And she does impress you that way. Always proudly silent—with head high. Indeed, she is quite beyond criticism. And Albert doesn't even notice her. It's enough to drive one to distraction.

HYACINTH. Beatrice, you are losing control of yourself.

BEATRICE. I know, but I can't help it. This is my last, my very last chance. And I will not lose it. I may have to perform a miracle, but I will suc-

ceed if it is the very last thing I do. (SYMPHOROSA *appears at the door.*)

SYMPHOROSA. The situation remains unchanged.

BEATRICE. Thank you, my dear. (SYMPHOROSA *disappears.*)

SYMPHOROSA. Don't mention it, my dear.

HYACINTH. Why take this so much to heart? After all, what must be, will be. And if you fail this time, you can try again.

BEATRICE. When, pray? Albert is now thirty-five and you can imagine how anxious his mother is to have him married. And do you think Alexandra will improve with age?

HYACINTH. How old is she?

BEATRICE. She is twenty-odd.

HYACINTH. Twenty what?

BEATRICE. Twenty-odd.

HYACINTH. That's an odd age.

BEATRICE. Say, she is in her twenties. But she won't be that forever. She is bound to fade. And yet she must be beautiful. Oh, I know I shouldn't be talking in this way.

HYACINTH. You can't help it. You are a devoted mother and you know that in our world, it is the family and not the individual that matters. The happiest families of royalty are composed entirely of unhappy members. We have to reconcile ourselves to that fact, my dear, or else make up our minds to keep out of history.

BEATRICE. Poor Alexandra. (SYMPHOROSA *enters.*) Well?

SYMPHOROSA. He is awake. Count Lutzen coughed at his door.

BEATRICE. Couldn't he help it?

SYMPHOROSA. He coughed on purpose. Albert is accustomed to be awakened by his cough.

BEATRICE. But I thought it was the Colonel who was guarding his door?

SYMPHOROSA. Count Lutzen came just to cough.

BEATRICE. Why didn't Colonel Wunderlich do the coughing?

SYMPHOROSA. Because Colonel Wunderlich's cough is so harsh and unpleasant. Count Lutzen coughs gently and discreetly.

BEATRICE. And then?

SYMPHOROSA. He asked for some *cologne* water.

BEATRICE. And then?

SYMPHOROSA. A cup of plain tea.

BEATRICE. And——

SYMPHOROSA. Rest assured—everything he asked for was there.

BEATRICE. When is he coming to see the boys?

SYMPHOROSA. I forgot to ask.

BEATRICE. Oh, my dear, my dear. Hurry now and find out. (SYMPHOROSA *off R,* BEATRICE *follows.* HYACINTH *rises.* BEATRICE *turns.*) You might know she would forget the most important thing. Heavens! Perhaps the boys are not ready yet. (*Starts to exit.*)

HYACINTH (*Restraining her*). My dear, you must be calm. The boys have had plenty of time to dress. Beatrice, what has become of your dig-

nity? You who are usually so calm—so cool and collected. . . .

BEATRICE. In time of peace, yes—but this is war. I am going to meet him. You call the boys. Oh dear, oh dear!

HYACINTH. Now now——

BEATRICE. Karl, Karl, do you want to see me any more nervous than I am now? This is the crisis! The moment when I have to summon up all my strength for one last desperate endeavor—and you tell me to be calm! (SYMPHOROSA *enters, very excited.*)

SYMPHOROSA. He is coming.

BEATRICE. When?

SYMPHOROSA. Now.

BEATRICE. Immediately?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, directly. In fact, he is on his way.

BEATRICE. Let us go to meet him. (*She hurries off followed by* SYMPHOROSA.)

HYACINTH (*Laughing, goes to door and calls*). Well, are you ready, boys? (*Turns back. The boys enter with* AGI.)

GEORGE. Here we are—ready and waiting.

ARSENE. Is he coming?

HYACINTH. He will be here directly. (*Turns to* AGI.) Tell me, my friend, after what we said about Napoleon—how will you present him now?

AGI. As I see him, Father.

HYACINTH. But if my sister insists that you conform to her views?

AGI. I shall try to convince her Highness that she is mistaken.

HYACINTH. And if she is not to be convinced?

AGI. In that case I fear I shall be obliged to resign.

HYACINTH. Your hand, sir. (*Shakes his hand.*) Now I understand you even better.

GEORGE (*Standing at the door*). Here they come!

HYACINTH. You stay here. Let me go to meet them. (*Exits.*)

AGI. We shall take our usual places at the table. Prince Arsene there, Prince George there, and I here. (*All sit.*) And your Highness—(*To* GEORGE.) If you are as fond of me as you said—

GEORGE. Don't worry—I won't disgrace you.

AGI. If you will try your best to give his Highness a good impression, we'll go to the observatory tonight.

ARSENE. To the observatory!

AGI. Yes, we'll be able to see Capella and Vega tonight and most of the summer constellations.

GEORGE. I'll be as well behaved as a lamb.

(*There is a brief pause, during which voices are heard outside the door.* PRINCE ALBERT *appears first. He is young, elegant, gracious. He wears a general's uniform. He enters chatting with* HYACINTH, *followed by* WUNDERLICH, LUTZEN, ALEXANDRA, *and* BEATRICE. *All take positions before the chairs where they will later sit.* AGI *rises back of table. Boys rise front of table.*)

ALBERT (*Continuing a speech begun outside*)

—and being a soldier, he naturally has a robust, manly cough—just what it should be—hearty and unrestrained. But to tell the truth, the Colonel's cough is a little too—too startling for me. It always wakes me with a jump. But you take Count Lutzen now; he is the diplomat and so his cough has more finesse and delicacy. His cough rises in a carefully modulated, rhythmic crescendo so that I am waked gradually and pleasantly. Strange what a difference such a little thing as a cough makes. *Mais c'est la vie!* (*Looks around, sees boys and* AGI.) Well! So here are the youngsters. (*To* AGI, *who bows deeply.*) And this would be the brilliant young tutor. (*Pause.*) Why don't you sit down? (*He seats himself and then the others sit simultaneously.*)

BEATRICE (*Sweetly*). Did you sleep well?

ALBERT. Astonishingly well. I really don't know why it is that I do sleep so well here. Whether it is the mild climate or the spring mattress or simply the pervading atmosphere of calm and repose. I wake from my sleep as refreshed as if I had taken a bath in warm milk. . . . Oh, I wish I could tell you how happy I have been here. Indeed, I shall never forget these past few days. Aunt Beatrice so thoughtfully attentive, and—(*With a gesture.*) —The old castle encircled by these gently rolling hills. Mother, you know, has always looked upon this as the ideal retreat—and so shall I hereafter. But more than anything else, I shall remember the charm and—spiritual harmony of your family life.

Oh, I can only say that I am in love with you all.

BEATRICE. We are more than delighted that you are so enjoying your visit with us.

ALBERT. When I am alone in the evening, I think of my father and your husband—Uncle Henry—and how they loved to walk together in the park.

BEATRICE. And talk of their children.

ALBERT. Yes, they were exemplary fathers—their only thought was for the welfare of their children.

BEATRICE. It was what they lived for. Always the children and their future—what would become of them. (*Moving her chair towards* ALBERT.) How some day they would have families of their own.

ALBERT (*To* HYACINTH). Evenings when I stand looking out of my window, I can still see the two old men walking together along the white gravel path beyond the lawn. And the fragrance of the roses pouring in upon me——

BEATRICE (*Rises—to* ALBERT). Alexandra's roses.

(HYACINTH *moves chair back a little.*)

ALBERT (*Turns to* ALEXANDRA). Your roses?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, mine.

ALBERT. Did you plant them?

ALEXANDRA. Not exactly—but I take care of them. (*Pause.*)

ALBERT. Do you find that amusing?

ALEXANDRA. Yes.

ALBERT. Do the thorns prick your fingers?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, quite often. (*Pause.*)

ALBERT. You should wear gloves then.

ALEXANDRA. I do.

ALBERT. And still you prick your fingers?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, through the gloves.

ALBERT. You should wear thicker gloves.

ALEXANDRA. Thank you—I shall try that.

ALBERT. *C'est ça.* (BEATRICE *sits.*) Such is life. One must be always prepared.

BEATRICE. How truly you speak!

ALBERT. It's nothing—simply—that is—one can't help learning a little—from experience—But I learned that at home from Mother, about the gloves I mean. Well— (*He stands up after a long pause. All rise.*) Suppose we take a look at the children. Is this where you study?

ARSENE (*Steps down*). Yes, during the summer.

ALBERT. You're twelve years old?

ARSENE. Yes.

ALBERT (*To* GEORGE). And you are fourteen?

GEORGE. Yes.

ALBERT. How time does fly—they will be grown up before we know it.

BEATRICE. Isn't it always that way, Albert?

ALBERT. I suppose you expect me to question you like an examiner.

GEORGE. Oh no, we know you won't do that.

ALBERT. Don't worry. I shall question only the tutor—our brilliant young Professor.

HYACINTH. I can recommend him highly—he is both a scholar and a sportsman—an astronomer and a foilsman.

ALBERT. That's what I like, the modern spirit.

(*Again noticing that they are all standing.*) Why don't you sit down. (HYACINTH, BEATRICE, ALEXANDRA, *and* SYMPHOROSA *sit down. The others remain standing.*) And what are you occupied with at present?

AGI. With history, your Highness.

ALBERT. A very good occupation. What period?

AGI. The first quarter of the last century, your Highness.

ALBERT. Napoleon?

AGI. Yes, your Highness.

ALBERT. Education is one of your hobbies, isn't it, Karl?

HYACINTH. Yes.

ALBERT. Did you know that Napoleon wanted to establish a school for kings in Men-dou?

HYACINTH. It would have been a capital idea.

ALBERT. It was to have received only boys who expected to have thrones. The curriculum was a novel one—no detailed study—just the broader and more general aspect of politics. It was all described in La Casa's *Mémoires.* I think it a splendid plan.

HYACINTH. One which only Napoleon could have conceived or undertaken.

ALBERT. There were so many things of which he alone was capable. But at any rate this idea of his appeals to me. A college which would give a degree of Bachelor of Monarchy, eh? (*Laughs; the others chime in. Looking around, turns up.*) Well, it is a pleasure to see such healthy young-

sters. (*To* GEORGE.) What fine eyes this one has—I feel as if he could look right through me.

BEATRICE (*Rising*). Alexandra has that same look. Their eyes are strangely alike. And he resembles Alexandra in other ways, too.

ALBERT (*Paying no attention to her*). But don't read too much, my boy. If you do your eyes will become dull and unsteady. Sailors have the finest eyes because they are forever looking across vast distances—the sky and the sea.

HYACINTH. Oh he'll like that. He wants to be a sailor.

ALBERT (*X to between boys, to* ARSENE *LC*). And what do you want to be?

ARSENE. An explorer.

ALBERT. What kind of an explorer?

ARSENE. I want to go to the Pole.

ALBERT. Which one?

ARSENE. To the South Pole.

ALBERT. I hope you don't think it will be warmer there, than at the North Pole. (*Laughs fatuously.*) And when does your expedition set out?

BEATRICE (*Arm over* ARSENE'S *shoulder*). He is setting out on an expedition with George immediately . . . to change into his fencing costume. Cousin Albert wants to see you fence.

ALBERT. Indeed I do. I am looking forward to it. (*The boys bow*). *Au revoir.* (*Boys bow and X to door. To* AGI.) Shall I see you again?

AGI. I shall be in the fencing hall, your Highness.

ALBERT. You teach fencing too?

AGI. Yes, your Highness.

ALBERT (*RC*). Well, well. You *are* versatile. *Au revoir,* then. (AGI *exits with boys.*)

ALBERT (*Seats himself*). An excellent young man. Intelligent yet becomingly modest. I am delighted with him.

HYACINTH. I took to him at once, too.

ALBERT. And good-looking in his way. Well—— (*Stands up suddenly.*) What are we to do until the fencing begins?

BEATRICE (*Rises*). I am afraid you have already seen everything that there is of interest. But if you care for roses—there is Alexandra's——

ALBERT (ALEXANDRA *rises*). Oh, yes.

BEATRICE. Alexandra takes great pride in her roses. And there are some truly remarkable specimens.

ALBERT. I have no doubt of it. (*Catches* WUNDERLICH'S *eye.*)

WUNDERLICH (*Stepping forward*). Perhaps your Highness would be interested in the new dairy which I saw yesterday. It has quite a novel feature. One of the modern innovations. The cows are milked by vacuum.

ALBERT. By vacuum?

WUNDERLICH. Yes, your Highness.

ALBERT. Like carpets?

WUNDERLICH. The same principle.

ALBERT. What a fantastic idea. We certainly must take a look at that. I've never seen anything like that. (WUNDERLICH *backs up again.*) Was it you who thought of it, Aunt Beatrice?

BEATRICE. I had it installed as an experiment.

ALBERT. What an astounding woman you are!

BEATRICE. If I may say so, Albert, the dairy is some distance from here.

ALBERT. So much the better—a brisk walk is just what I need.

BEATRICE. Whatever you wish. Let us go to the dairy.

ALBERT (*Stops her*). Oh no, I shouldn't think of troubling you. I'll go alone with Lutzen and our friend the Colonel. We shall want to walk at a good pace.

HYACINTH (*Rises*). I'll join you if you like.

ALBERT. No, I won't allow it. I won't have anyone inconvenienced by my curiosity.

HYACINTH. But——

ALBERT. No, not a word more. (*Starts to door.*) I don't want you to feel that you have to run about with me as if I were a stranger. Let us be going, Lutzen—Colonel. Send someone after us when it is time for the fencing.

BEATRICE. I shall telephone.

ALBERT. But we are going to the cows.

BEATRICE. Yes, I know.

ALBERT. Do they have telephones, too?

BEATRICE. In every stall.

ALBERT. A woman of genius. It is incredible. (*Pause. Then suddenly.*) Goodbye. (*Hastens off with* LUTZEN *and* WUNDERLICH. *General silence.* BEATRICE *seats herself in despair. Exit* ALEXANDRA, *deeply hurt. Pause.*)

HYACINTH (*Sits*). He disposed of the rose garden rather neatly.

BEATRICE (*Sits*). Now do you see? And you tell me to be calm! It is beyond enduring. And did you hear the Colonel? No sooner had I mentioned the roses than he brought up the cows.

HYACINTH. It was not intentional—a mere coincidence.

BEATRICE (*Rises*). Coincidence? Well, I know how to make use of coincidence too.

HYACINTH. My dear Beatrice, if you mean what I think you mean, remember that your subtle deep-laid schemes have not always been attended with complete success.

BEATRICE. Do you think I am the one to give up while there is a ray of hope left—or a half hour of time? You will see. (*Sits by* HYACINTH.)

SYMPHOROSA (*Rises*). I am afraid you're planning something.

BEATRICE. To think that that is the only way left.

SYMPHOROSA (*Alarmed*). What way?

BEATRICE. A frightful way—but there is no choice now.

SYMPHOROSA. You alarm me, Beatrice.

BEATRICE. You may well be alarmed. For what I am about to do is so unspeakable that I could never forgive anyone else who . . .

HYACINTH. Beatrice . . .

BEATRICE. God will forgive a mother what she does for the sake of her child. (*Tears in her eyes —to* HYACINTH.) And you will forgive me.

HYACINTH. Consider yourself absolved.

SYMPHOROSA. When I hear you talking in this way all I can say is—"Don't do it."

BEATRICE. Please have the kindness to be quiet. (*Rises.*) And pay attention. The whole trouble is that Alexandra has not succeeded in arousing Albert's interest—I mean she has not appealed to his feelings as a man.

SYMPHOROSA. Oh, dear, oh dear.

BEATRICE. What is the matter with that? He must have *some* feeling—*He is a man,* isn't he?

SYMPHOROSA. I know, but——

BEATRICE. Furthermore, there are very definite limits as to what Alexandra can do. She can hardly make eyes at him.

SYMPHOROSA. It gives me some comfort to hear you say that.

BEATRICE. Alexandra simply cannot throw herself at him.

HYACINTH. Well, what then?

BEATRICE. There is only one thing which can arouse a man's interest in a woman; the interest of another man in the same woman.

SYMPHOROSA. This is the unspeakable part.

HYACINTH. Not yet—we are still talking in generalities. Go on, Beatrice.

BEATRICE. Well, in short, Albert must be made to respond to the woman in Alexandra—the rest will follow of itself. Alexandra is clever and—open to reason—and Albert told us he found the tutor charming—— (*All this almost in one breath.*)

HYACINTH. This is the interesting part.

BEATRICE (*Very excited*). I know what you will say—but you can't stop me now. (*Rises.*)

HYACINTH. Yes, but what about the tutor?

BEATRICE. We—are going to invite him to the reception tonight. And Alexandra will—will notice him. Oh, I should never have dreamed of it if Albert himself had not suggested the idea. You remember how he praised the Professor? That was what gave me my inspiration. To think that I should be forced to employ such an outworn strategem. The tutor and the Princess! So hackneyed—and still so effective. (*Sits by* HYACINTH.) Because you see, a rival of his own rank wouldn't bother him in the least. But when that rival is a petty tutor, then he will realize the danger.

SYMPHOROSA. This is more than I can bear.

BEATRICE (*Rises*). You must bear it, Alexandra will look at the tutor—and Alexandra will dance with the tutor. And God will forgive me and God will forgive Alexandra—— I shall never forgive the tutor.

HYACINTH. And why not?

BEATRICE. Because I shall be indebted to him.

SYMPHOROSA. So, she may smile at the tutor, but not at the Prince.

BEATRICE. It is an entirely different thing—why, it is just as if she smiled at her dog. (*Sits.*)

SYMPHOROSA (*Rises*). Karl! How can you calmly

sit there while your sister says these terrible things?

HYACINTH. Because it doesn't strike me as being very terrible. Merely the customary tactics of the harassed mother. There is no reason for making such a to-do about it. No, it's not Beatrice's method that I am thinking of.

SYMPHOROSA. What is it, then?

HYACINTH. I am thinking of the tutor.

BEATRICE. Is that all? What of him?

HYACINTH. Tell me, my dear, has Alexandra even so much as glanced at the tutor before? Has she ever smiled at him?

BEATRICE. How can you ask such a thing?

HYACINTH. No? And it hasn't occurred to you to wonder what will happen when the tutor suddenly discovers that his Princess has become aware of his existence?

BEATRICE. If you think he is likely to place a false interpretation on her conduct, you need have no fear. I shall take care of *that* danger.

HYACINTH. Yes, I suppose you will. But—the tutor is young and, being young, not incapable of fashioning dreams. Perhaps my eyes have lost their old skill in reading the face of a young man, but there was something in the way that boy looked at your daughter that I could not mistake. There was reverence in his look but it was reverence not without desire. He was like a cat watching a beautiful bird—the cat has a certain respectful

admiration for the bird, but it would also like to eat it.

BEATRICE. Are you trying to tell me that he is in love with her?

HYACINTH. No, but at least Alexandra has aroused *his* interest.

BEATRICE. But what of it?

HYACINTH. What of it? Nothing, except that a brave lad like that was not meant to be used as a tool and then thrown away.

BEATRICE. In other words, it is the tutor you care about?

HYACINTH. No, not the tutor—the man.

BEATRICE. What is the difference? What it amounts to is—that the happiness of your niece and the fate of our house interests you less than the feelings of this tutor!

HYACINTH. My dear Beatrice, you have seen me in this frock so long that you no longer notice it. You know what interests me—the only thing that has any meaning for me; and that is the dignity of the human heart, and the divine life, which flows from it. What are your little schemes—or Albert's throne—or Alexandra's crown to me? What are they, that you should sacrifice for them the peace of a man's soul? (*Change of tone.*) Now, when I kept my racing stables, I used to enter two of my horses in the same race, so that one of them would set the pace for the other—and then I would let the second horse come up and win. But those were horses—not men. A woman

who would so use a man—who would so lightly break his pride—such a woman, my dearest sister, has every reason to explain that she does so for her daughter's sake. Now do you understand, my dear? (*Change of tone, rising.*) Well, I believe I'll have a look at this vacuum machine myself. (*Exits.*)

BEATRICE (*X up R and back down C—fiercely*). No one shall stand in my path now! And you might as well stop crying. Put away your handkerchief. I am calm, now, desperately calm—and not to be trifled with. As for my brother, do not be troubled by what he said. He has always had his theories—and no manners. If it had been left to the men of our family, we would have lost our throne in the seventeenth century. Go now and send Alexandra to me. (*Exit* SYMPHOROSA. *Short pause.* ALEXANDRA *enters.*)

ALEXANDRA. You wished to see me, Mother?

BEATRICE. Yes, my dear! Alexandra, because my blood flows in your veins there is no one in all the world nearer to me than you are. That is why you will understand me now.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, Mother.

BEATRICE. And, for the seame reason, wish for the same thing that I do!

ALEXANDRA. Yes, Mother.

BEATRICE. And if it does not lie as near to your heart as to mine, if you do not wish for it as passionately as I do, then you must *will* yourself to!

ALEXANDRA. Yes, Mother, but that is unnecessary.

For I feel as you do about it. I know how serious a matter it is, I understand perfectly.

BEATRICE. Don't be discouraged by any little hurt that your pride may have suffered.

ALEXANDRA. Mother——

BEATRICE. *And,* furthermore, remember that to the stronger will everything and everyone must yield. Do you understand me?

ALEXANDRA. So far, Mother. But what do you wish me to do?

BEATRICE. We are going to invite—to the reception, this evening—the tutor. Or rather *you* are going to invite the tutor.

ALEXANDRA. I, Mother?

BEATRICE. Yes, you.

ALEXANDRA. The tutor?

BEATRICE. Yes, the tutor. (*With tears in her eyes.*) Oh I know what a frightful thing I have said. But your mother—in this desperate extremity—(*Turns* ALEXANDRA *hands on her shoulder.*) Oh—my dear, bear with me—you *must* bear with me—because I love you so dearly!

ALEXANDRA (*Coldly*). Mother——

BEATRICE. Need I explain further? Now you know all my thoughts!

ALEXANDRA. I understand, Mother.

BEATRICE. I would have sent for a Duke from Vienna—but there was no time. And besides a duke wouldn't have been as satisfactory anyway.

ALEXANDRA (*Coldly*). As you wish, Mother. I shall invite the tutor to the reception.

BEATRICE. But not in that tone of voice.

ALEXANDRA. I know, Mother.

BEATRICE. And you will permit him to—to dance with you! (ALEXANDRA *is silent.*) Is that too much?

ALEXANDRA. Too sudden, Mother.

BEATRICE. Sudden? But, my dear, it must be sudden. We have no time—no time at all.

ALEXANDRA. Don't misunderstand my hesitation—but—I need just a minute to—adjust myself to the idea. Why, the tutor is the son of a common farmer. (*She sits.*) And when I think that his arm will rest on mine——

BEATRICE. You will wear gloves, my child.

ALEXANDRA. It is not so much the touching him that I mind—it is the thought of it.

BEATRICE (*Sits beside her*). Do you ask your flowers or your pets who their ancestors were? Or does it trouble you to smile at a dog or a pretty squirrel?

ALEXANDRA. Of course if you look at it in that way.

BEATRICE. The only possible way to look at it.

ALEXANDRA. Still there *is* a difference, isn't there—It——

BEATRICE. Don't be ashamed to tell me what you are thinking.

ALEXANDRA. Well, he is a man, isn't he?

BEATRICE. Of course—but——

ALEXANDRA. And he must think about—such

things; that's the difference between him and the pretty squirrel.

BEATRICE. His thoughts are his own concern.

ALEXANDRA. But he might misunderstand.

BEATRICE. There will be nothing in your conduct toward him that *could* be misunderstood. I am confident of that.

ALEXANDRA. And you can be. Yet this change in my manner toward him—it can't help but have some effect on him.

BEATRICE. That again is *his* concern.

ALEXANDRA. Nevertheless I feel I ought to be prepared—to know what to do if—I'm merely supposing—one has to think of these things—but suppose he should—feel himself—well, attracted to me?

BEATRICE. Is there anything to make you think he feels this way already?

ALEXANDRA. I said I was only supposing.

BEATRICE. But you haven't noticed anything?

ALEXANDRA. There are certain things one *never* notices.

BEATRICE. Then you have.

ALEXANDRA. He does sometimes appear rather embarrassed when he speaks to me.

BEATRICE. Oh that is nothing—nothing for you to trouble about. (*Rising, stands by* ALEXANDRA, *her hand on her shoulder.*) All that you have to think of is your own goal—toward that you must resolutely advance, looking neither to the left nor the right but always forward.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, Mother. (ALFRED *enters.*)

ALFRED. The Professor begs to inform your Highness that your royal sons are dressed for the fencing and now await your Highness' further direction.

BEATRICE. The boys are to proceed to the fencing hall and there wait. Ask the Professor to come here.

ALFRED. Yes, your Highness. (ALFRED *exits.*)

BEATRICE (ALEXANDRA *rises*). And now, my dearest child—courage! (*Kisses her.*) Courage! (*Exits.*)

(ALEXANDRA *remains alone for a few moments. Then* AGI, *dressed for fencing, and carrying a foil, enters. He stands waiting at the door.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Without looking at him*). This evening there is to be some astronomical event, is there not?

AGI. Yes, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. What is it?

AGI. Tonight Vega and Capella may be seen more clearly than at any other time of the year.

ALEXANDRA. Vega?

AGI. The principal star in the constellation Lyra. A blue star which shines with an intensity a thousand times greater than that of the sun.

ALEXANDRA. And the other?

AGI. Capella—an extremely brilliant star of a golden color.

ALEXANDRA. You were intending to take the boys to see them this evening, were you not?

AGI. Yes, Princess—from the observatory.

ALEXANDRA. You love the stars?

AGI. Very much, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. And you know all about them?

AGI. Oh, very little, Princess. But that little seems wonderfully beautiful.

ALEXANDRA. You shall not watch the stars tonight.

AGI. As your Highness wishes.

ALEXANDRA. We—we are giving a reception this evening in honor of the Prince's departure. He is leaving in the morning.

AGI. That is a pity.

ALEXANDRA. Only the most important people have been invited—so there will not be many of us. I —have expressed the wish that you should be among the guests.

AGI. I!!

ALEXANDRA. And so you can hardly be star-gazing this evening.

AGI (*Embarrassed*). I feel deeply honored, Princess, particularly to have received the invitation from your own lips.

ALEXANDRA. It will be a somewhat formal affair. I hope you won't find it stupid.

AGI. I could hardly find it stupid when your Highness is to be present.

ALEXANDRA. If you do find the company of so many notables tiresome—please come and talk with me.

AGI (*Astonished*). If your Highness will allow me to——

ALEXANDRA. I want to hear you talk of something besides fencing. For you know that is all you have ever spoken to me about.

AGI. I had no choice, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. You shall tell me of the stars—about that blue star and the golden star.

AGI. It will give me the greatest pleasure, Princess.

ALEXANDRA (*Looking at him for the first time*). Strange—that I should feel—a little afraid of you, now.

AGI. Afraid?

ALEXANDRA. There's something formidable about you as you stand there, sword in hand.

AGI. It is not the first time that your Highness has seen me with my sword.

ALEXANDRA. But in the fencing hall I have a sword, too. Now I feel quite defenceless.

AGI. Do I appear as fierce as that?

ALEXANDRA. Not fierce but——

AGI. But?

ALEXANDRA. Rather aggressive.

AGI (*Surprised*). Aggressive? But Princess, it is I who feel defenceless. (ALEXANDRA *turns toward door.*)

ALEXANDRA. Then you will come.

AGI. Yes, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. You would not rather watch the blue star?

AGI. No, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. At nine, then.

AGI. You are most kind, Princess.

ALEXANDRA (*At door R*). No, Professor no, not at all. (*Nods briefly, then exits.* AGI *stands looking after her for a moment, leans slightly after her.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

It is late evening of the same day. The same room as Act I but some of the furniture has been changed or rearranged. The curtains over the two upper entrances have been drawn back. Through the open French doors, back at the right, is seen a terrace with a balustrade and beyond a garden in the moonlight. The upper door on the left is also now open and shows a corridor leading to the dining-room, kitchen, etc. The other doors are the same as in Act I, the right leading to hall, distant ballroom, etc. and the left to the family sleeping-rooms, etc.

The small table at the back is now used as a serving table and the long study table now does duty as the dining table. It is elaborately set with lace cloth, china, and gold service. There are five upholstered chairs across the back and one at each end. In front of the table are two stools to match. Lights are on in the chandelier and brackets and heavy curtains are over the window. A large throne-chair is nearby.

As the curtain rises music is heard from the distant ballroom. CÆSAR *is discovered, pouring wine into the glasses and putting the finishing touches to the*

table. After a moment he goes up to back and stands immobile as a statue.

SYMPHOROSA *enters from the garden, looking back as if expecting someone to follow. A short pause then* BEATRICE *enters.*

BEATRICE. Did you beckon me?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes.

BEATRICE. Whatever is the matter? Why so much mystery?

SYMPHOROSA. I couldn't whisper to you out there.

BEATRICE. I never saw you in such a state. What *is it?* Now tell me, quietly, what you want.

SYMPHOROSA (*Turns little front*). Beatrice, it seems to me that Alexandra has been sitting out there with the Professor altogether too long.

BEATRICE. Symphorosa, I am so happy that for once in my life I'll admit you're right.

SYMPHOROSA. I am—it has gone just a shade further than is necessary.

BEATRICE. Perhaps in my elation over our success I *have* overdone it a little. But don't let it alarm you. Well, what would you suggest doing?

SYMPHOROSA. For the present, it will be enough to have her leave the Professor.

BEATRICE. Yes, you are right, my dear—now go and warn her to leave him. How will you do that?

SYMPHOROSA. I'll signal to her—with my eyes—like this. (*Demonstrates.*)

BEATRICE. That will do it. (SYMPHOROSA *starts up.*) Go then, my dear.

SYMPHOROSA (*Turns back to her*). You are the cleverest woman in all the world!

BEATRICE. The cleverest in this room, perhaps—but there is a still cleverer one outside—my daughter. (BEATRICE *turns a little and back.* SYMPHOROSA *sighs.*) Don't sigh. You'd do much better to admire ALEXANDRA'S poise and *savoir faire*; how deftly she is accomplishing her purpose. Why twice already this evening, Albert has confided to me that for the first time he has realized how truly beautiful she is. You shall see— He won't leave tomorrow and the day after that, his mother, Maria Dominica, will be here. (*Noticing* SYMPHOROSA'S *impatience.*) But I know how anxious you are, my dear. So go and signal to Alexandra. (SYMPHOROSA *hastens off.* BEATRICE *sees* CÆSAR *back of table.*) Cæsar.

CÆSAR (*Steps toward her*). Your Highness.

BEATRICE. Is everything ready?

CÆSAR. As you directed, your Highness.

BEATRICE. Here?

CÆSAR. Five covers for the Prince and the Royal Family and one cover each for the aide and the Professor.

BEATRICE. The service must be beyond criticism, Cæsar.

CÆSAR. Your Highness!

BEATRICE. The menu?

CÆSAR. Quite as the guest of honor would like it.

His Excellency, Count Lutzen, was so good as to inform me what his Highness particularly likes in the summer.

BEATRICE. What does he like?

CÆSAR. Cold consommé.

BEATRICE. Yes.

CÆSAR. Cold salmon.

BEATRICE. Yes.

CÆSAR. Cold roast beef.

BEATRICE. Yes.

CÆSAR. With his own mustard.

BEATRICE. His own mustard?

CÆSAR. His Highness' special mustard.

BEATRICE. What do you mean by that?

CÆSAR. His Highness takes his own mustard with him when he travels.

BEATRICE. That's a new idea.

CÆSAR (*Steps down to her*). On the contrary, your Highness, the chef informs me that the custom dates back to ancient times. Among the most fashionable of the Greeks, it was their practice to take their relish with them when dining out.

BEATRICE. The chef seems to be well informed.

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness. He also told me that the Greek epicurean used to wear a sheath over his tongue which he removed only before eating.

BEATRICE (*Looking at him reprovingly*). I did not ask you that.

CÆSAR. I merely ventured it as an interesting. . . .

BEATRICE. Confine yourself to answering my questions.

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness. And cold chicken.

BEATRICE. What?

CÆSAR. There will also be cold chicken—after the cold roast beef.

BEATRICE (*Turns away*). When is the supper to be served?

CÆSAR. In twenty-four minutes, your Highness. And also an ice.

BEATRICE. The menu is too cold for me. Please put some hot, unsweetened tea in my consommé cup.

CÆSAR. Forgive me, your Highness, but I fear that the hot tea will betray itself, steaming alone among so many cold consommés.

BEATRICE. Then see that it does not steam.

CÆSAR. I don't know how, but it will be arranged as you wish. The tea shall not steam.

BEATRICE. So I shall expect it. (CÆSAR *steps back.* SYMPHOROSA *enters.*)

BEATRICE. Well?

SYMPHOROSA. I motioned to her.

BEATRICE. And——

SYMPHOROSA. She got up immediately.

BEATRICE. Good. I like it when things run smoothly. And now, dear, would you mind seeing whether they have put the mustard-plaster on Arsene's throat? (*Ushers her to door on left.*)

SYMPHOROSA (*Turns at door*). What a mother you are!

BEATRICE. Ah—there is no joy in this life comparable to a mother's! (SYMPHOROSA *hastens off.*

To CÆSAR.) Where will the supper be served from?

CÆSAR. From here, your Highness. (*Goes to door back L. He claps his hands twice. A procession of servants enters, slowly, single file.* ALFRED, *platter in hand, comes first. After him come two* LACKEYS, *each carrying a platter, borne ceremonially aloft. In the rear are two* HUSSARS *with champagne buckets.* ALFRED *and the two* LACKEYS *go to front of the table and, their backs to the audience, lay the three platters on the table. The two* HUSSARS *go to table C, facing audience.* CÆSAR *claps hands again.* LACKEYS *X to above and below niche L and* ALFRED *to up LC.* CÆSAR *turns to* BEATRICE.) Voilà!

BEATRICE. Splendid, Cæsar! Splendid! (*She hurries off to the ballroom.. Cæsar bows profoundly. As* BEATRICE *exits,* HUSSARS *turn and put coolers on table and face front.*)

CÆSAR. (*When the door has closed behind* BEATRICE). HUSSARS! (*The* HUSSARS *come forward. He inspects them from head to foot.*) About face. (*They obey the order. He adjusts their tunics.*) Very good! (*They march back up C, backs to audience.*) Front! (*The* HUSSARS *face front to R and L of table C.*) Alfred! (ALFRED *comes forward slowly, and with dignity.*) *Son Altesse prendra au lieu du consommé froid du thé chaud. Mais du thé chaud non fumant. Le thé doit faire comme couleur absolument l'impression d'un consommé froid.*

ALFRED. *Jawohl! Sie können sich bestimmt auf mich verlassen. Alles wird in Ordnung sein.*

CÆSAR. *Vabene, mio caro, vabene, vabene, grazia, grazia!* (ALFRED *exits followed by the two* LACKEYS. *The* HUSSARS *go to table and occupy themselves.* CÆSAR *joins them, supervises their activities, and gives them whispered orders.*) (*Meantime* ALEXANDRA *has entered back. Behind her, almost beside her, comes* AGI *to door.*)

ALEXANDRA. Cæsar.

CÆSAR. Your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. Is this where we are to have the supper?

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness. Small tables have been set up for the other guests in the yellow room. The guest of honor is to be here with the Royal Family. Her Highness, your mother, has but this moment left.

ALEXANDRA. Then, if Mother has seen the tables there is no need for me to bother about it. At what time is the supper to be served?

CÆSAR. In seventeen minutes. Is there anything your Highness desires?

ALEXANDRA (*Motions for* HUSSARS *to go.*) Thank you, no. (CÆSAR *goes to the table, and claps hands. The* HUSSARS *exit on a sign from* CÆSAR. *He fusses about the table but is listening intently.*)

AGI. May I escort you back to the ballroom?

ALEXANDRA. No, thank you. . . . I am afraid you didn't understand me. When I said I had to in-

spect the table, I didn't mean that you should come with me. (*Exit* CÆSAR.)

AGI. I beg your pardon, your Highness. (*Makes a move to go.*)

ALEXANDRA. That's not what I meant either—don't go. (*Embarrassed.*) Perhaps I expressed myself too bluntly. What I meant was . . .

AGI. Your Highness——

ALEXANDRA. Forgive me—I am so inexperienced in this sort of thing—I had no intention of being rude to you.

AGI. I understand, Princess. I followed you only because you stood up while I was telling you of the constellation of the Eagle. I had a stupid idea I must finish the sentence I was on. . . . I was saying that it was composed of seven stars, which seven stars suggest an eagle in flight—and the head of the eagle. . . .

ALEXANDRA. That was where I stood up.

AGI. And I didn't have the sense to realize that you wished to escape.

ALEXANDRA. Perhaps I did. Your stars lost their brilliance—when you came to talk of them.

AGI. I am deeply ashamed, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. I expected to be told of the mystery and the beauty of them—and I only heard how many million kilometers apart they were. I had no idea the Milky Way was so dry.

AGI (*Follows her a step*). I would have spoken of the thoughts with which the stars inspire me——

ALEXANDRA. That might have been more interesting.

AGI. Among those far-off stars lie my thoughts of the Unknown—of birth and death—of life and—(*Softly.*)—love.

ALEXANDRA (*Coldly*). Can you conceive of such remote things?

AGI. When I look up to you, Princess— (*Pause.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Still colder*). And the Unknown?

AGI. When I look into my own heart. (*Pause.*)

ALEXANDRA. And do you believe in these miracles?

AGI. I must believe in them, Princess—what else could give courage to endure my life?

ALEXANDRA. Is your life then so unendurable?

AGI. It would be if . . .

ALEXANDRA. If——?

AGI. If I did not have two lives. There is the life *you* know—but I have another life, quite apart from that—a burning, inextinguishable life.

ALEXANDRA. Why have I never suspected that?

AGI. Because your Highness evidently believes in miracles, too. At least, you have been able to believe that the cold, impassive expression of my face was real—even when struck.

ALEXANDRA. You are struck—in the face? (*Pause.*)

AGI. Every day.

ALEXANDRA. By whom? (AGI *does not answer.*) Who strikes you in the face? Who? Do you mean I do? (AGI *nods.*)

ALEXANDRA. Without knowing it?

AGI. That is why it hurts so much.

ALEXANDRA (*Turns a little*). This is stranger than your stars. You mean I hurt you?

AGI. Your Highness witnesses a miracle every day. You see a young man whose face, whose voice, whose outward bearing all remain composed and expressionless while in his heart there is a raging fire. And yet it never occurs to you to ask for the explanation of this miracle.

ALEXANDRA. The explanation?

AGI. Yes. Why do you think I bear all that I do? Why do I teach so humbly, and silently submit to everything? Why do I allow my pride to be trampled upon? Why am I here where I am? Why do I live as I have to live here?

(ALBERT *enters with two ladies.* AGI *sees him and leaves* ALEXANDRA.)

ALEXANDRA. You make me see things which——

ALBERT (*Interrupts jovially*). That's what I call being an ideal hostess. Consulting with the musicians before the concert and with the major domo before the supper. She has an eye for everything.

FIRST LADY. Ah, but you should see her Highness with the patients in the hospital.

ALEXANDRA. I can't accept any credit for that, Countess. It is you and the other ladies who are responsible for the work—I simply come and inspect.

SECOND LADY. Oh, your Highness.

FIRST LADY. Oh!

ALBERT. Her modesty doesn't deceive me. I know

she has her mother's wonderful nature. (*To* AGI.) Good evening, Professor. AGI *bows.*)

ALBERT (*To the ladies*). A very brilliant fellow, this young man. (*Starts with ladies.*) Besides being a highly trained astronomer and a teacher, he is a fencer of the first rank. I saw him fence with the boys this afternoon. *C'était parfait!* (*Looks back at* AGI *from L.*) *Parfait!* (*Exits with the ladies.* AGI *follows to door and looks after them. Then returns with bowed head.*)

ALEXANDRA. You seem very downcast now. What has saddened you so suddenly?

AGI. Shall I tell you, Princess?

ALEXANDRA. Is it something dreadful? Something I ought not to hear? (*Pause.*)

AGI. I am jealous. (*Pause.*)

ALEXANDRA. Oh—and now I feel saddened—I seem to have come to the Unknown that you spoke of—I feel as if I were lost among those far-off stars.

AGI. I should have left it unsaid—but this evening . . .

ALEXANDRA. Yes, I know—this evening.

AGI. For months you have been cold and reserved towards me. Your politeness was as false as your indifference was real. And now tonight— (*Steps to her.*)—this evening—you suddenly begin to look at me as if I were a man—and you even speak with a little kindness.

ALEXANDRA. I said nothing that . . .

AGI (*Beside her*). Perhaps—but everything you

have said and done and looked—has left me shaken and bewildered—and no longer able to subdue my feelings. When you were so far removed from me, so hopelessly unattainable, then your remoteness gave you the beauty of the stars. And now that beauty is lost—because of this evening.

ALEXANDRA. I don't know what to say—only that I wish I could give it back to you.

AGI. That is beyond your power, little Princess.

ALEXANDRA. Why do you call me that? I don't like it. (*Turns away.*)

AGI. You will not hear it again. I shall leave, if you ask. Indeed, even if you ask me to stay, I shall go. (*Turns a little.*) Oh, I can't speak to you as I used to . . . you have sent my thoughts whirling, Princess. But tomorrow, tomorrow . . .

ALEXANDRA. No, now. I must make you understand now. Oh, I am so ashamed.

AGI. Ashamed?

ALEXANDRA (*Turns away*). No, I can't tell you.

AGI. I implore you to tell me. I wouldn't ask you if I didn't see that something is troubling you—that you are struggling with yourself. (*Hopefully.*) Perhaps, if I urge you, if I beg you, it would embolden you to speak, to open your heart—and make me happy.

ALEXANDRA. No, no! Now you have misunderstood me again—and I am to blame for that, too. This will not make you happy.

AGI (*Follows*). What is it?

ALEXANDRA. You must respect me now?

AGI. Princess!

ALEXANDRA. And you will say nothing of this?

AGI. Nothing!

ALEXANDRA. Never?

AGI. Never.

ALEXANDRA. I want you always to respect me—and I want to be at peace with myself—once more. I think we can rely on you as a good friend. My family—that is, my mother—has but one aim in life—to see me a Queen, so that I may restore our family to its lost throne. Oh, Professor, cherish always this moment. Respect me for every word that I am trying to say—for I feel as if each one was drawn bleeding from my heart. The Prince paid no attention to me, and so my mother thought that if there were another man—Albert's interest might be aroused. Oh, believe me, I can feel for you in your suffering, but—I must unburden my heart. I never harmed anyone before—you are the only man I ever hurt—and I wouldn't have hurt you. Indeed, I always treated you coldly just because I felt—well, because you seemed embarrassed when you spoke to me, but I'm weak and Mother knows so well how to handle me. Never since I was a little child have I said "No," to her. It was she who suggested that I invite you here this evening. Had I dreamed, Professor, had I foreseen what no one could have foreseen—or if I had known how the eyes of a man can smoulder when his heart is on fire—or that any man would

dare look at me as you do. (*Short pause. She goes slowly to the table and sits down.*) Now I have told you everything, Professor, and there is a peace in my heart again. Can't you respect me a little even for what I have done? I can thank my dear mother—because without her, I might never have known what it was to suffer for another's pain. (*Pause.* AGI *bows his head.*)

ALEXANDRA. Have you nothing to say?

AGI. You did only what you were told.

ALEXANDRA. I don't want to seem less guilty than I am. It was hateful of me to make it appear all my mother's fault. I too am to blame. (*Pause.*) I want to be a Queen. (*Pause. Lets her head sink on her arm.*)

AGI. Then—I can go now.

ALEXANDRA. Why do you say that?

AGI. What else is there for me to do?

ALEXANDRA (*Rising*). Don't reproach me. I told you the truth only to show that I respected you. (AGI *watches her.*) But I was wrong again. (*Turns.*) Why do you look at me so strangely?

AGI. Something in my heart has snapped. Why did you *have* to tell me?

ALEXANDRA. Did I do the wrong thing?

AGI. Why did you tell me?

ALEXANDRA. Because I respect you. Did I hurt you so much?

AGI (*Ironically*). No—it was just a box on the ear.

ALEXANDRA. Would you like to punish me?

AGI. I worship you, Princess, and now I can wor-

ship hopelessly again. (*Bitterly.*) But have no anxiety on my account. I shall be properly submissive and I am quite at the disposal of your distinguished family. I bleed a little—perhaps it is a mortal wound—nevertheless I can enjoy the interesting rôle you have given me. It amuses me and appeals to my sense of the dramatic. What better way of serving a beautiful Princess—with a smile on your lips and a dagger in your heart!

ALEXANDRA. That does not ring true.

AGI. Truer than you think.

ALEXANDRA. And it was only for your good that I told you.

AGI. You do not need me any more. The Prince has caught fire—the tutor can be extinguished.

ALEXANDRA. I won't have you think that of me.

AGI. What I think will not trouble you—I shall serve in silence. Don't look so worried. Let us smile as if nothing had happened. (*Steps to her. Enter* ALBERT *with two ladies.*) Can't you smile? I can. We were talking of the eagle—And the head of the eagle. . . . (*Enter* BEATRICE. AGI *draws back.*)

ALBERT. Still here?

ALEXANDRA. The Professor has been telling me the most fascinating things about the stars. It seems there is to be some kind of an astronomical event this evening.

ALBERT. Where?

AGI (*Nervously*). In the sky, your Highness.

ALBERT. I know—but in what quarter?

AGI. It really isn't much of an event—just that tonight you can observe the so-called summer stars particularly well—Capella, Arcturus, Vega, and the constellations of the eagle—a figure formed by seven stars, which seven stars suggest an eagle in flight, and the head of the eagle-——

ALBERT. I had no idea it was such an eventful evening.

ALEXANDRA. And the head of the eagle?

ALBERT. I didn't know you were interested in the stars, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA. I have never paid much attention to them before.

ALBERT. Roses have interested you more, perhaps. But how bright the sky is this evening. A beautiful summer night. The stars shine like so many eyes.

BEATRICE. If you are interested, we have an observatory in the tower.

ALBERT. Indeed? I didn't know that.

ALEXANDRA. It is only an amateur observatory.

ALBERT. I suppose that the brilliant young Professor fitted it up—our jack of all trades. (HYACINTH *and* SYMPHOROSA *enter.*)

AGI. No, your Highness, it was here when I came.

ALBERT. Why hasn't this been shown to me?

ALEXANDRA. Your Highness goes to bed too early. The stars have no regard for etiquette.

ALBERT. Excellent. That sounds as if it might be one of the Professor's epigrams.

ALEXANDRA. No, it's mine.

ALBERT (*To* HYACINTH) Did you hear what she said?

HYACINTH. Who?

ALBERT. Zara. She said the stars have no regard for etiquette. (WUNDERLICH *enters.*)

BEATRICE. We have torn the Professor away from his beloved stars tonight.

HYACINTH. And the boys, too.

SYMPHOROSA. The boys were looking forward to going to the observatory tonight.

HYACINTH. Well, they can look at them tomorrow. How fortunate that the stars are always there—— (*The two ladies exeunt.*)

ALBERT. I wish I had known that there was an observatory here. (CÆSAR *enters.* ALFRED *enters with salmon platter, two* LACKEYS *enter.*)

HYACINTH. My brother-in-law bought the telescope. The Colonel has often seen it.

WUNDERLICH. Oh, yes, I burnt my tongue there once.

ALBERT. With the telescope?

WUNDERDICH. No, your Highness, I tasted some acid in a cup.

SYMPHOROSA. That must have made an impression on you.

WUNDERLICH. A deep, deep impression.

BEATRICE. I think it is time for us to have a bite to eat.

ALBERT. More than a bite, I hope. By night-time my appetite becomes quite uncontrollable. Doesn't it, Wunderlich?

WUNDERLICH. Yes, your Highness, God be praised.

ALEXANDRA (*Low to* AGI). Don't let your face show what has happened.

(ALEXANDRA *and* AGI *stand down stage R.* HYACINTH *and* ALBERT *at centre, a trifle back,* BEATRICE *and* SYMPHOROSA *down left in front of the table.*)

ALBERT. Zara seems to be lost in the stars.

BEATRICE (*Turns to* ALBERT). She takes such an interest in the boys' education.

ALEXANDRA (*To* AGI). Have I wounded you so deeply?

AGI. Yes, Princess.

BEATRICE. It is really she who supervises their study.

ALBERT. Some fine day you will find she has become an astronomer. (AGI *starts. Follows* ALEXANDRA *determinedly.*)

BEATRICE. You seem in poor spirits, Professor. (*She stands directly in his way.*)

AGI. On the contrary, your Highness, this is the happiest evening of my life.

BEATRICE. But you appear nervous—your face is flushed.

AGI. That may be due to the unaccustomed surroundings.

HYACINTH (*To* ALEXANDRA *at the table*). Your face is flushed, my dear. But it's no matter. That color in your cheeks only adds to your beauty.

ALEXANDRA. It always brings the color to my cheeks—when I hear music played.

BEATRICE (*Nervously*). If you are tired, we won't keep you.

AGI. I am not tired, your Highness. Indeed, I am just beginning to feel awake.

ALBERT (*To* ALEXANDRA). Do you like music??

BEATRICE (*Speaking across the table*). Indeed she does. She sings, you know.

ALBERT (*To* ALEXANDRA). And yet you haven't sung once for me since I've been here.

SYMPHOROSA (*To* AGI. *Standing with* BEATRICE *and* AGI). If you would rather go to bed.

AGI. Go to bed, your Highness. I have just awakened. Barely five minutes ago.

ALEXANDRA (*At the table to* ALBERT). I was afraid to sing before you, you are such a connoisseur of music——

ALBERT (*By her*). I, a connoisseur? That's good! Did you hear that, Wunderlich?

WUNDERLICH. Yes, I heard, your Highness.

BEATRICE (*X front of* SYMPHOROSA *to* AGI. *RC. Again standing in* AGI's *way.*) I can see you are not well, Professor. I will have supper sent up to your room.

AGI. No, I'll have supper here.

ALBERT. Aunt Beatrice, what is the matter? Have you taken up astronomy? Do you want us to starve?

BEATRICE (*Goes front to around L, back of table*). I am so sorry, Albert.

SYMPHOROSA (*Following* BEATRICE). We are lost.

ALBERT. I have always noticed that my appetite is best at night.

HYACINTH. You are like Louis XIV—in that.

BEATRICE (*Back of table*). Let us sit down. (LACKEY No. 1 *places chair for* SYMPHOROSA. LACKEY No. 2 *places chair for* BEATRICE. CÆSAR *places chair for* ALBERT, ALFRED *places chair for* ALEXANDRA. *After guests are seated,* ALFRED *signals* LACKEYS *who exit.* ALBERT *and* ALEXANDRA *sit down.* WUNDERLICH *sits L end of table.*) Will you sit here, Professor? (*Points to a place between* SYMPHOROSA *and her, but* AGI *seats himself beside* ALEXANDRA.)

AGI. Thank you.

BEATRICE. No, not there—here, Professor.

AGI. Thank you. This will do very well. (*Painful pause.* HYACINTH *shaking his head, sits down R end of table. The* LACKEYS *exit.*)

SYMPHOROSA (*Whispering to* BEATRICE). We are lost.

ALBERT (*Seated*). The Bourbons did very well by themselves in the day-time as well. Louis XVIII once consumed fifteen pork cutlets at a public banquet. Imagine what he could do in private. Does that disgust you, Aunt Beatrice? You don't seem very attentive.

BEATRICE. Not at all—I heard you. Louis XV and the eighteen cutlets.

ALBERT. No, Louis XVIII and cutlet fifteen.

BEATRICE (*Sweetly*). I do hope you are fond of cold consommé, Albert.

ALBERT. There is nothing I like better in summer.

BEATRICE. I am so glad.

SYMPHOROSA. What a fortunate coincidence!

HYACINTH. And what a time it takes for them to bring it. (*Two* HUSSARS *appear with trays of consommé cups.*)

BEATRICE. It is coming now, my dear. (CÆSAR *and the* HUSSARS *bring on the soup.*) We didn't want it to get warm. (*The soup is served*).

AGI (*Breaking the silence*). And the head of the eagle—I must finish this sentence—is the star called Altair, Alpha, Aquilæ, the star whose wonderful green light shines so brilliantly tonight.

ALEXANDRA. You had a difficult time finishing that sentence.

ALBERT. The Professor turns out to be a brilliant conversationalist with such an appreciative audience as Zara.

BEATRICE. It may have been brilliant, but I couldn't understand a word of it.

AGI. I am a very dull talker. Indeed, her Highness remarked on that herself.

ALBERT. Did you?

ALEXANDRA. Yes.

BEATRICE (*To divert* ALBERT'S *attention*). Is your consommé cold enough, Albert? (*The music begins to play again.*)

ALBERT. Yes, it is just the right temperature.

WUNDERLICH. His Highness takes his soup at four degrees centigrade.

HYACINTH. High sounding talk is no sign of wisdom. It is enough that he has studied a little and learned a little.

AGI. I am an indifferent talker because I have done nothing but study.

HYACINTH. You needn't be ashamed of that, my boy.

ALBERT. May I ask how many hours a day you study?

AGI. Generally ten, and as many at night.

ALBERT. Ten and ten make twenty. (*Rises and looks over table.*)

BEATRICE. What are you looking for, Albert?

ALBERT. The salt.

WUNDERLICH. Here, your Highness. (*Passes salt to* SYMPHOROSA, *to* BEATRICE, *to* ALBERT.)

ALBERT. Thanks. (*Sits down, helps himself to the salt.*) Leaving four hours for sleep.

AGI. Sometimes not that many.

ALBERT. That's terrible. I have to have fifteen hours of sleep. (*Pause.*)

SYMPHOROSA. I need eight. (*Pause.*)

HYACINTH. I need six. (*Pause.*)

SYMPHOROSA (*To* WUNDERLICH). And you? (*All toy with cups—long pause.*)

WUNDERLICH. Two.

AGI. It depends on the individual. Napoleon, for example— (*Suddenly stops, looking at* BEATRICE. *Pause. All drink consommé, lifting cups simul-*

taneously to cover embarrassment. HYACINTH *coughs.*)

ALBERT. So you know too much to be eloquent? (CÆSAR, ALFRED *and* HUSSARS *remove consommé.*)

AGI. All that I have learned must first be assimilated in my blood. It must ferment there like wine before it can give off that delicate fragrance which you call poetry. There are many things needed to startle into song the poet that is in every man.

ALBERT. A beautiful woman, for example.

AGI. Perhaps.

BEATRICE. But, Albert——

HYACINTH. It makes no difference who the woman is. I have known some women who could strike dumb the most inspired poets.

BEATRICE. And a good thing they could. I have no use for poets.

AGI. And then there are some men whom no women can cause to suffer. I envy such men!

ALEXANDRA. Why?

AGI. Because I am not one of them—a woman is the one thing I fear.

ALBERT. You are afraid of beautiful women? Have they such an effect on you as that?

AGI. I am too sensitive. (ALFRED *and* HUSSARS *serve salmon.*) What another man can put behind him with a laugh remains with me to fester in my soul.

ALBERT. That is not necessary.

AGI. I know it.

BEATRICE. Not likely.

ALBERT. Have you never let yourself be interested in a beautiful woman?

AGI. Never, your Highness. I have studied.

ALBERT. Oh, come now.

AGI. That is the truth, your Highness. I have come with one step from my books into the world. A pity if I should come to grief at the start.

HYACINTH. What a pity!

AGI. I have no fear for myself—but I have a mother, and you can understand that being an only son, I am all the world to her. And then I have a sister, too—she is not beautiful, but she is a plucky, clever girl—and I have worked so hard for her sake. I want to see her well married. (*Looks around the table.*) Please forgive me—now it is I who am doing *all* the talking.

ALEXANDRA. Don't stop. I am so interested in what you are saying.

AGI. And then there is my old teacher, Professor Waldbrot——

HYACINTH. At Heidelberg?

AGI. Yes, Father; he lectures there.

ALBERT. What does he lecture on?

AGI. Astral-chemistry.

ALBERT (*To* WUNDERLICH). What is that?

WUNDERLICH. Ah—ah—— (*Starting to speak.*)

HYACINTH (*Answering for him*). The chemistry of the heavenly bodies.

ALBERT. Oh!

HYACINTH. I know him—a great man, and a distinguished scientist.

AGI. He is that, indeed—and he has honored me with his confidence.

ALBERT. The chemistry of the heavenly bodies?

AGI. What?

ALBERT. Nothing. (*Repeating to himself.*) The chemistry of the heavenly bodies.

AGI. Yes.

ALBERT. Yes. (*Pause.*)

AGI. Professor Waldbrot has told me that he would die contented if he knew that I was to carry on his work. You might say that he has entrusted to me his two great theories.

ALBERT. I beg your pardon—but how many great theories has he altogether.

AGI. Just those two.

ALBERT. And he has entrusted them both to you?

AGI. Yes.

ALBERT. Well, well.

AGI. It's no small trust, your Highness.

ALBERT. By no means, not at all.

AGI. It imposes an added responsibility. I explained all that because it is only on account of him and my mother and sister, that I have a thought of myself when—(*Looking at* ALEXANDRA) I am in danger. (*Pause. He raises his glass.*) I drink to the very beautiful daughter of the house. (*Drains the glass in a single gulp.* SYMPHOROSA *nudges* BEATRICE *repeatedly with her elbow.*)

ALBERT. That was a mighty draught.

HYACINTH. Don't you know that one doesn't gulp down heavy wine like that?

AGI. No, I didn't, Father. I am not used to it.

HYACINTH. Let me introduce it to you with due ceremony. That is Tokay, my boy, and very old at that.

BEATRICE. And it is meant to be taken with the desert and not with the soup.

HYACINTH. Two mistakes—you drank too soon and you drank too much.

AGI. I really didn't know. To tell the truth, that is the first glass of wine I ever took.

HYACINTH. Not really?

AGI. Yes, Father, but tonight anything can happen. (ALEXANDRA *empties her glass.*)

BEATRICE. Alexandra!

HYACINTH (*Snatching* ALEXANDRA'S *glass away from her*). Didn't you just hear me say you shouldn't drink Tokay so quickly?

ALBERT. I know why she did it.

HYACINTH. Why?

ALBERT. To make the Professor feel less embarrassed.

BEATRICE. That was quite unnecessary. You never take any wine.

ALEXANDRA. But tonight I do. (*To* ALBERT.) Couldn't you get this old Professor some sort of an appointment? Waldbrot—that's his name, isn't it?

HYACINTH. Yes, Waldbrot.

ALBERT. If you would like me to, I shall write to

the Emperor about him. Wunderlich, make a note of it.

WUNDERLICH (*Writing in notebook*). I have, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. What sort of an appointment could he be given?

AGI. I can't think of anything that would be worthy of him.

ALBERT. The Emperor could do something for him.

AGI. Hardly. He is already in the service of a far greater master.

ALBERT. Greater than the Emperor?

AGI. Much greater (*Points up.*) He is an astronomer.

ALEXANDRA. I should like to know your sister.

AGI. She lives in Dresden.

ALEXANDRA. Do you love her very much?

AGI. Very much, Princess.

ALEXANDRA. That was a silly thing to ask you?

BEATRICE. It was.

AGI. Not at all, Princess, it was just the right question—because it gives me so much pleasure to answer it. Yes, I love my sister—with all my heart. And in the darkest hours I think of her. Because *she* believes that I am not meant to be trampled upon, that it is wrong that I should be. For to her, I am a world in myself.

ALBERT. A world in yourself?

AGI. Yes, Your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. How very beautiful.

ALBERT. But a bit exaggerated, perhaps?

AGI. No, your Highness. I am an astronomer. And astronomy teaches you not to despise even the tiniest specks, for these minute specks in the sky are each worlds in themselves.

ALBERT. All of them?

AGI. All of them.

ALBERT. And these little specks, are they aware of that?

AGI. Yes. I know that is something that you rulers of the earth can hardly appreciate. You speak of ten million inhabitants, an army of two million, quite as if these millions were not all sovereign worlds—worlds that one may not destroy.

BEATRICE. But Professor, no one here wants to destroy any of your worlds.

AGI. Women sometimes do it with a smile (*To* ALEXANDRA.) Your gracious Highness is looking at me very intently.

ALEXANDRA. I like what you say.

AGI (*To* BEATRICE). And your Highness is looking at me very nervously and anxiously. Perhaps you do *not* like what I say.

BEATRICE. I am not quite accustomed to hearing you speak in this way, Professor.

AGI. I am in exceptionally good spirits this evening, your Highness.

BEATRICE. Perhaps a little more so than one would wish.

ALEXANDRA. Mother, this is a ball and we have been drinking wine.

BEATRICE. Nevertheless, you astonish me, Professor.

SYMPHOROSA (*Suddenly*). —and this salmon, Albert, you must notice this salmon—it is quite the pride of the chef.

ALBERT. He talks very prettily, you know. That's why Zara is so pleased with him. What's wrong with the salmon? You said something about the salmon.

WUNDERLICH. Her Highness remarked it was quite the pride of the chef.

ALBERT. Yes, yes, that's splendid. What of it?

SYMPHOROSA. I just said it, that's all.

ALBERT. I see. Hmmm. Little specks in the sky. . . . astronomy . . . worlds one may not destroy —pretty phrase . . .

AGI. Not phrases, your Highness.

ALBERT. Yes, phrases—pretty phrases to impress the ladies with. Every star a sovereign world!

AGI. Not every one, your Highness.

ALBERT. No?

AGI. No! There is that great white moon out there. It seems very bright and shines with a rather imposing splendor—and yet it has no light of its own, it only reflects the sun's rays. But take Vega, now—the one you ridiculed so a little while ago—well, that remote, barely discernible little star, for all its modesty, shines a thousand times more brightly than the sun.

ALBERT. How considerate of it to be so modest.

AGI. It isn't modest—simply a great way off.

ALBERT. All the more reason for it to twinkle modestly.

AGI. It twinkles modestly only for you, your Highness. But for me who can appreciate it, it shows its true strength. And I take pride in proclaiming that it shines more brightly than the sun—and that it shines with its own God-given radiance, your Highness. (*Places his hand on his breast.*) Its own!

ALBERT (*Smiling*). No doubt, Professor, but it seems I do not understand these things.

AGI (*Decidedly*). No, your Highness.

BEATRICE (*To* SYMPHOROSA). Oh, I can't bear this any longer.

ALBERT. Splendid! At last someone who dares to tell me there is something I don't understand.

AGI. Yes, Your Highness, this is something you know nothing about.

ALBERT. For twenty years I have longed to be addressed in that tone. Let me tell you, that as an astronomer, and as a man, you have delighted me—and your manner is charming.

AGI. Whether or not I have delighted you, doesn't interest me.

ALBERT. And so frank. Charming! Charming! (BEATRICE *slowly stands up preparatory to fainting behind table.*)

BEATRICE. Oh—oh!

ALBERT (*Puts down his glass*). What is the matter, Aunt Beatrice? (*He stands up.*) Aunt Beatrice, *tu te trouves mal?*

(WUNDERLICH *X up L to* BEATRICE *back of table.* CÆSAR *X down and moves* ALBERT'S *and* ALEXANDRA'S *chairs back up C.* ALFRED *pulls back* BEATRICE'S *and* SYMPHOROSA'S *chairs to L, then Xes up RC.*)

BEATRICE (*With a weak voice*). My head—all of a sudden—*Laisse moi—je ti' en prie*—excuse me. (WUNDERLICH *is supporting her.*) *Merci, mon Colonel*—please . . . (WUNDERLICH *X to down R. The* HUSSARS *hurry to close the curtain back R and L and exit back.* WUNDERLICH *goes to R.*)

ALBERT (*Supporting* BEATRICE *L, back of table*). *Tu te trouves mal.*

BEATRICE. You will have to excuse me—a little faintness . . .

WUNDERLICH (*To* CÆSAR). Stop the music. CÆSAR *signals to* ALFRED *who hurries off. After a short pause the music ceases.*)

ALBERT. You have had such a strenuous day, let me take you to your room.

HYACINTH. Don't you bother, Albert, I'll take care of her. (ALFRED *re-enters.*)

ALBERT. No, no, I insist. You stay here. (*To* SYMPHOROSA *who follows.*) And you, Symphorosa, stay with the salmon. Sit down, Zara. Let's not get excited. I will go with Aunt Beatrice.

BEATRICE. There must be no confusion—so many guests in the house.

ALBERT. Yes, my dear—everything will be all right.

(*To the others.*) Please, I ask you all to remain here. (*Supporting* BEATRICE.) Just as if nothing had happened. (*To* WUNDERLICH.) Why has the music stopped?

WUNDERLICH. I thought perhaps your Highness would prefer the catastrophe without music.

ALBERT (*Going out with* BEATRICE). No, no, let the music continue—the more, the merrier. (CÆSAR *nods to* ALFRED *who hurries off.*)

BEATRICE. *Pardonnez—moi, merci—mon cher.* (ALBERT *and* BEATRICE *exit.*)

WUNDERLICH. The music? (*Looks at* CÆSAR *inquiringly. Music starts again.* WUNDERLICH *exits up R.* CÆSAR *exits.*)

AGI (*To* SYMPHOROSA). Is your Highness also indisposed?

SYMPHOROSA. No.

AGI. What is it then?

SYMPHOROSA. I don't know what to do.

AGI. I'll tell you. Follow them—and let the music continue—the more the merrier.

SYMPHOROSA (*Turns to* ALEXANDRA). And you? (ALEXANDRA, *undecided, starts a little.*)

HYACINTH (*Rises; restrains* ALEXANDRA). Stay here, dear, your mother told you not to go.

SYMPHOROSA (*To* HYACINTH). And you?

HYACINTH. My dear sister, I love Beatrice very dearly, but you and I have known her for forty years now, and we have seen so many of these sudden attacks, that we needn't be alarmed by them. When they come on her standing up, she

sits down—and when they come on her sitting down, she stands up.

SYMPHOROSA. Karl!

HYACINTH. Things are much more serious here. But then I predicted that at five o'clock this afternoon.

SYMPHOROSA. What a catastrophe! (*Exit.* HYACINTH, ALEXANDRA *and* AGI *alone. There is a pause.*)

HYACINTH. Well, my son, have you had enough of madness for one night?

ALEXANDRA. It is my fault. I am responsible for everything. That's why I stayed, so that I . . .

HYACINTH (*His arm around her*). Gently, gently, my dear. Let us talk quietly. That's what I stayed for. As long as I am here, you needn't worry. (*To* AGI.) But you are trembling.

AGI (*Sitting down*). I am not afraid.

ALEXANDRA. Hyacinth— (*Leaning on* HYACINTH's *shoulder.*)

HYACINTH (*Soothing her*). Rest there, my dearest. I understand it all—I know so well how it happened.

AGI (*Rising; vehemently*). I couldn't stand it any longer, Father. I couldn't. God knows I meant to bear it in silence until tomorrow—but I am a man—and in love, Father— And I didn't know what I was saying.

HYACINTH. Tell me, my boy, are you angry at me too?

AGI. At you?

HYACINTH. Then don't shout at me. I can hear what you say and understand it, too.

AGI (*Sits*). I have reached the end—but I will not give my life away so cheaply again. (*Raises head.*) Not even for this beautiful Princess. Yesterday, this afternoon, I would have laid down my life for her handkerchief—but now that I have been wounded, my life seems dearer to me.

HYACINTH. What you have done . . .

AGI. Is done. And I'll face the consequences. (*Rises.*)

HYACINTH. I was sure you would say that.

AGI. I know—it was *lèse-majesté* and worse. But I am ready to answer for it to anyone—the family—the Prince, the Colonel, with swords, cannons—whatever. But what I did I had to do, and now I must do more.

HYACINTH. More?

AGI. Still more. (*Turns his back and looks out into garden.*)

HYACINTH. And so this is our earnest, serious scholar. (*To* ALEXANDRA.) Well, little one, what do you think of this? (*Reproachfully.*) How do you like it?

ALEXANDRA. Come here.

HYACINTH (*Going to her, front of table*). Well?

ALEXANDRA. Sit here. (*Makes room for him; he sits by her L front of table.*)

HYACINTH. Well?

ALEXANDRA. Now ask me again how I like it?

HYACINTH. How do you like it?

ALEXANDRA (*Her head on his shoulder, in a low voice*). Hyacinth, I like it very much.

HYACINTH. Merciful Mother! Even worse than I thought. (*Arm around her.*)

ALEXANDRA. Hyacinth, dear Hyacinth, I—I——

HYACINTH, Well, what is it? Out with it!

ALEXANDRA. That glass of wine—it is the first one I ever drank, too.

HYACINTH. You did very well for the first time.

ALEXANDRA. It was for his sake—so they wouldn't make fun of him.

HYACINTH. Ah, what strange things have I seen tonight. Well, how did it make you feel?

ALEXANDRA. Oh, warm and so—so comfortable. Wouldn't it be nice to die this way? But first he must forgive me.

AGI. How can I forgive you?

HYACINTH. There, there, I will forgive you for him, my dear. (ALEXANDRA *puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*) Don't cry.

ALEXANDRA. You don't know why I am crying.

HYACINTH. Why then?

ALEXANDRA. Because I am so sorry for him, the poor boy.

AGI. Please, you needn't pity me.

HYACINTH. I'll withdraw the word for her, my son.

ALEXANDRA. I never was so sorry for anyone in my life.

HYACINTH. And when he looks at you, you are still sorrier for him.

ALEXANDRA (*Looking at* AGI). When he looks at me, my face burns——

HYACINTH. —and—then——

ALEXANDRA. And then his eyes look into my heart, and it's as if someone had touched a piano key—lightly—with one finger.

HYACINTH. A piano key, I know—and then——

ALEXANDRA. When he speaks to me—when he speaks to me, his voice rings through my conscience—like a bell—and that hurts—oh, I am so sorry for him.

HYACINTH. So! I wonder if this isn't a case of something else besides pity or remorse?

ALEXANDRA. What could it be?

HYACINTH. A case of—let me see— (*Bends physician-wise over her breast.*) Something wrong here—no, not there—it's on the left side—I wonder, could it be—Now take a deep breath—sigh—and say "Professor."

ALEXANDRA (*Sighing*). Professor.

HYACINTH (*Dryly, straightening and looking at her*). Heart trouble!

ALEXANDRA (*Laughing*). Oh, you are making fun of me, Hyacinth.

HYACINTH. Not I. This is serious. Tell me, my dear, when did you begin to feel so sorry for him?

ALEXANDRA. Just a little while ago—here in this room—very suddenly—something he said. . . .

HYACINTH. What did he say?

ALEXANDRA. He will remember.

HYACINTH. What did you say?

AGI. It was when I said I was a world in myself.

ALEXANDRA. No.

AGI. No? Then when I said your remoteness gave you the beauty of the stars.

ALEXANDRA. No, not that, either.

HYACINTH. Then what was it?

ALEXANDRA. When he said—a box on the ear.

HYACINTH. Why did he say that?

ALEXANDRA. I asked him if I had hurt him so much and he said, no, it was just a box on the ear.

HYACINTH. So that was it?

ALEXANDRA (*Smiling—as if in a dream*). Mother never boxed my ears—she only looked at me—the way she does—when I was naughty. When he said that, it suddenly dawned on me he was a little boy once and that when he was bad, they boxed his ears. There's something old-fashioned about having your ears boxed—like being stood in the corner. That made me see the village where he lives—the cottage with the white acacia trees around it—and his dear mother—who loved him so very much—even when she boxed his ears. What do you think of that, Hyacinth?

HYACINTH. I think, your mother should have boxed your ears.

ALEXANDRA. You dear. (*Hugs him.*)

HYACINTH. See, my son, I know what women like. . . .

AGI. You dear, gracious Princess, I have forgiven you—for everything.

ALEXANDRA. But I haven't forgiven myself. Oh, what have we done? And poor dear Mother—(*She starts to rise.*)

HYACINTH. Stay here, dear. It won't do any good to go to her now. Rest a while and then we will go together.

AGI (*Goes to table, takes chair from end of table and sits, facing them*). Your mother was very cruel.

ALEXANDRA (*Seated*). That hurts me, too—everything seems to hurt me. Yet I feel so very happy here. (*Arms about* HYACINTH.) You are so sweet and so strong—how is it you understand so well?

HYACINTH. A nice state of affairs you have got me into. Now I suppose I must be severe with you. Yes, I will be severe! When the horses shied, your Mother jumped clean out of the carriage and now I have to take the reins. (*He stands up.*) We must understand each other once and for all. This must end here—but you know that, too, don't you, my children? You have far too much sense not to realize that. (*To* AGI *C.*) What you did—do you have to look so piteously sad about it? How do you expect me to be severe with you? (*Begins again.*) What you did—and don't look at me so respectfully either—the truth of the matter is that both of you— (*To* ALEXANDRA.) Why must you be so ridiculously happy?

There is no reason at all for you to be happy. Oh, this is quite beyond reason. (*Takes a step down.*) It is disgraceful the way you two bully me—you sit there, without saying a word, just looking at me, and I can't say one thing I meant to. (*To* AGI.) What you did was really—I might say it was— (*Looks away from him.*) It was really—really quite natural. Well, at last I've said it. (*To* ALEXANDRA, *angrily.*) And now why are you looking at me so lovingly?

ALEXANDRA (*Delighted*). Because you are looking at me lovingly, Hyacinth.

HYACINTH. Oh, that's the worst of it—quite the worst. I look at you and then—I just look at you —that's it, I look at you and my heart aches for you. You two dear children, so young and so innocent—and I, how can I judge you? I try to, but it's no use. How can I judge you as you sit there in this hour of glorious beauty—the boy so brave and foolish, the girl so guiltless and foolish —two brave children in such a plight—and so happy—happier than they can ever be again—for your happiness will vanish with the night's breeze. You hardly knew it when you had it. Now the daylight is almost here—the daylight that must separate you. What a sad awakening for you, you poor children! I had such an awakening once, but that was long ago—so very long ago. (*Turns away, pauses, goes to the table, pours glass of wine, turns facing front and raises glass.*) To your happiness! (*He drinks.*)

(CÆSAR *enters discreetly.*)

HYACINTH. Well?

CÆSAR (*Softly*). Her Highness requests that the Reverend Father be so kind as to come to her.

HYACINTH. At once?

CÆSAR. Her Highness' very words.

HYACINTH. Just as I was beginning to enjoy my supper.

CÆSAR. Was your reverend highness not pleased with the cold consommé?

HYACINTH. Cold consommé? You gave me a cup of scalding hot tea.

CÆSAR. Merciful Heavens, I shall kill myself from mortification, Reverend Father.

HYACINTH. I wouldn't do that—but then I know you won't. And don't scold the servant who made the mistake. But of course you will. I will come back shortly, children.

ALEXANDRA (*Stands up;* AGI *rises*). But, Hyacinth, how can you leave me here—I really should go to Mother.

CÆSAR. Her Highness, Princess Symphorosa, asked whether her Highness, your Mother, wished to see your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. And——

CÆSAR. Her Highness, your Mother, expressed the wish—that——

ALEXANDRA. Well, what then?

CÆSAR. Her Highness' words were—"Tell her to keep out of my sight."

HYACINTH. So, you can see, my dear, you had

better sit down again while I go and speak to your mother. I will come back for you. (*Exit.* CÆSAR *draws back up R.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Pause. Seated again*). I don't think I know your first name. What is it?

AGI (*Seated*). Nicholas.

ALEXANDRA. How old are you?

AGI. Twenty-four.

ALEXANDRA. Where were you born?

AGI. Czegledin.

ALEXANDRA. What part?

AGI. Princess, at last we are alone, and you question me like a census-taker.

ALEXANDRA. I don't know how to begin. You see, I want to know about you—all there is to know and all at once.

AGI. And in the morning——

ALEXANDRA. Let the morning take care of itself—the minutes are precious now—precious for you and for me. Please . . .

AGI (*Rises, takes chair back to table*). In the morning they will sweep me out of here like so much dirt.

ALEXANDRA. And if I forbid them to?

AGI. I shall go just the same.

ALEXANDRA (*To* CÆSAR). What are you waiting for?

CÆSAR. For your orders, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. Tell the orchestra to play something that is—not permitted.

CÆSAR. Forgive me, your Highness, but the selec-

tion of the music is left entirely to the artistic discretion of the musicians.

ALEXANDRA. I forgive you—as I forgive whoever it was who served Father Hyacinth the hot tea.

CÆSAR. It seems, your Highness, that it was I who made the mistake. Small wonder, after what has happened tonight.

ALEXANDRA. That is all; you may go.

CÆSAR. Leave?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, leave at once.

CÆSAR (*Backing up R*). You mean you want me to go away?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, at once.

CÆSAR (*Comes a little down RC*). Your Highness, may I say something?

ALEXANDRA. Well?

CÆSAR. The world is coming to an end, your Highness. (*He exits weeping.*) AGI *looks after him. He goes to the door to see there is no one within hearing, and then back to* ALEXANDRA.

AGI. They have all gone, the guests too. We are alone together, dear Princess. Perhaps only a few minutes, and then the end of this—the only thing of beauty in all my life—Are you afraid of me?

ALEXANDRA. I don't know. But if it is fear, then let me always be afraid.

AGI. The last hour, perhaps the last minute I can be with you. Do you love me?

ALEXANDRA (*Like a child*). If this is love, then it is very much like the time when I was a little girl

and the Emperor—(AGI *looks at her astonished.*) I had seen many portraits of the Emperor—with a crown of gold on his head—in all his pomp and glory—and then when he came to visit us, dressed like any other man, I didn't know him.

AGI. You dear, clever Princess. (*Goes toward her.*)

ALEXANDRA. Don't come any nearer, Nicholas. This is the first time I have ever seen a man in love— and he happens to be in love with me.

AGI. Are you so very much afraid of me? (*Takes her hand.*)

ALEXANDRA. Frightfully—at the thought of your being—so close to me—how cold your hand is!

AGI. And yours is warm. What do you feel that makes it tremble so in mine?

ALEXANDRA. Something that burns and——

AGI. And——?

ALEXANDRA. Must you look at me like that—when I only want to be kind to you?

AGI. It is not kindness I want—no, not that—to look into your eyes—deep into your eyes, and then to see them close as . . .

ALEXANDRA. What do you mean?

AGI. And then to go on and on—never to stop—on the way which you have shown me.

ALEXANDRA. Which I have shown you?

AGI. Yes—without knowing it. In my cowardice, this evening, I did not dare to think I could be the rival of a king, but now——

ALEXANDRA. And now?

AGI (*Taking her hand*). Now we shall see who is King—he or I?

ALEXANDRA (*Drawing a little away*). Oh, please, please.

AGI. When I said nothing, that was the time for you to be afraid.

ALEXANDRA. Do you want to be revenged on me?

AGI. I am in love, Princess, and this is my one hour of life.

ALEXANDRA. Poor boy!

AGI. I will not have you pity me. They will be here soon—a minute more and then I am the disgraced servant. Will it end so? Shall I see you once more in all your proud disdain and ever after regret that I didn't carry you away—— (*Attempts to embrace her.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Resisting*). Nicholas! (CÆSAR *enters.*)

CÆSAR. His Highness, the Prince, is about to retire. He has just received a telegram. Her Royal Highness, the Princess Maria Dominica, is coming here.

ALEXANDRA. His mother? Coming here?

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness. May I take the liberty of informing you that His Highness will pass through this room presently? If your Highness wishes, you can go out through this room. There is just time.

ALEXANDRA (*Proudly*). You dare to suggest that? Have you been drinking?

CÆSAR (*Sadly*). No, your Highness, I have simply lost my mind.

ALEXANDRA (*Proudly*). I have no intention of running away.

(ALBERT *enters with the* HUSSARS. ALFRED *holds curtains back L and two* HUSSARS, *each with lighted candelabra enter back L, stand at each side of door, as* ALBERT *enters to down RC, then X to* WUNDERLICH *who follows and stands up L.* LUTZEN *with him, X to door down R and pushes them open and stands between* HUSSARS. ALFRED *follows, X to door down L and stands.* CÆSAR *at R of door back R.*)

ALBERT (*Jovial*). How lucky to find you here; now we can say good-night. (*Takes her hand.*) I was to have left in the morning, but now I am happy to tell you my dear mother will be here then. But perhaps you have already heard?

ALEXANDRA. I have, Albert, and I am very glad.

ALBERT. Mother is so fond of you.

ALEXANDRA. I am no less fond of her.

ALBERT. Your mother has gone to bed—although she feels much better. The day was a bit strenuous for her.

(HYACINTH *slowly enters, followed by* SYMPHOROSA, *who remains at door.*)

ALEXANDRA. Mother can be happy only when she is attending to her guests.

ALBERT. But she goes to extremes. I fear it was partly on my account. My mother will give me a good scolding for that. Fortunately it is nothing

very serious. Good-night, Zara. (ALEXANDRA *bows.*)

ALBERT (*As if he has just seen* AGI). Ah, the Professor. Good-night, Professor. I like what you said—and the way you said it. A little defiant, but very original. When her Highness was taken ill, I was just about to make my modest comment—I had no idea you were such a rebel.

ALEXANDRA (*Nervous, with a forced smile*). Albert, you are mistaken.

ALBERT. No, I find these astronomical outbreaks very interesting—something new and unconventional. What I like to think of as temperament. (*To* HYACINTH.) He sat down so unobtrusively with us and then the first thing we knew he had lifted us to the skies and there he stayed—after letting me drop back to earth. (*To* AGI, *LC.*) There was inspiration in your words—it was very pretty—upwards, ever upwards——

ALEXANDRA. Your ridicule is unjust, Albert—he is not like us.

ALBERT. So I observed.

ALEXANDRA (*More and more excited*). He is a scientist, a free spirit—he is not bound by our conventions.

ALBERT. You defend his bad manners now with as much grace as you tolerated them a while ago. You are a brave-hearted girl, a little martyr. I have just learned from your mother that you have been the uncomplaining object of certain unwelcome attentions—and that . . .

ALEXANDRA (*Very excited*). Mother is mistaken, Albert, and your insinuations are unjust. You do not understand him.

ALBERT (*Ironically*). It's not easy then to understand him?

ALEXANDRA. But you don't understand him now. (ALBERT *laughs.*) Don't laugh at him, Albert. He is a scholar and a poet—an astronomer.

ALBERT (*Calmly*). An ill-bred little star-gazer.

AGI (*Taking a step forward*). Your Highness!

ALEXANDRA (*Beside herself—standing in* AGI'S *way*). You are going too far, Albert. You mustn't say such a thing.

ALBERT. Ah, but I do.

ALEXANDRA. I will not allow it—when it was for my sake that——

AGI. Your Highness, I—I——

ALBERT (*Coldly, calmly*). You are a presumptuous intruder.

AGI (*With a start forward*). You——

ALEXANDRA (*At the height of her excitement*). Don't answer him, Nicholas. (*Looks at him.*) I forbid you to. (*With her voice breaking.*) Nicholas! (*For a moment she hesitates, looks at* ALBERT, *then throws herself on* AGI, *embraces him passionately, kisses him and rests a moment against his breast.*)

(SYMPHOROSA, LUTZEN, WUNDERLICH, CÆSAR *and* ALFRED *are standing at doors. At the moment of the kiss they all withdraw quietly.* HYACINTH *does not go. He only takes a few steps back-*

wards. ALEXANDRA *releases* AGI, *stands a moment stiff and staring, then leans half fainting against the edge of the table.*)

ALBERT (*Bowing formally*). I beg your pardon. That is another matter—quite another matter. In that case, I most humbly beg your forgiveness, Professor. (*Bows stiffly to* AGI *and* ALEXANDRA, *goes to door and turns.*) Good-night. (*Exits L.* LUTZEN *is seen to close doors.*)

(*There is a pause.* SYMPHOROSA *enters and leads the half-swooning* ALEXANDRA *gently, tenderly off. When they both have gone,* HYACINTH *approaches* AGI *bravely, almost threateningly, stops in front of him and kisses him suddenly. Smiling graciously,* HYACINTH *hurries off.* AGI *stares after him.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

The scene is the same but it is morning of the following day. Sun is shining in the garden and outside the window from which the heavy curtains have now been drawn back. The curtains are now closed at the upper entrance left, but the door behind is open so that characters may pass through. The other entrances remain the same. There is a chair to the right of centre, an armchair about centre and other chairs against the walls. To the left of centre is a small table on which are flowers, books, etc. Three chairs are around it.

As the curtain rises, SYMPHOROSA *is discovered speaking to the chambermaid.*

SYMPHOROSA. We have no way of telling when HER HIGHNESS PRINCESS MARIA DOMINICA will arrive. All that she said in her telegram was "Arrive this morning." Since there is no morning train, she must be coming by motor. We can expect her any minute.

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, your Highness.

(BEATRICE *enters and sits.*)

SYMPHOROSA (*Hurries to her*). My dear, why are

you up so early? It is not yet seven. Are you feeling better?

BEATRICE (*Unhappily*). I couldn't sleep—not a wink. I tossed and turned all night long? Are the guest-rooms ready?

CHAMBERMAID. Quite ready, your Highness.

BEATRICE (*Tearfully*). And the bath?

CHAMBERMAID. We have just started the fire; the water will be warm in half an hour. (*Exits.*)

BEATRICE. Dominica is to have the rooms facing the lake?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, the sitting-room—the bedroom with its dressing-room and the bathroom. (BEATRICE *begins weeping again.* SYMPHOROSA *to front of chair.*) Don't cry, dear, God can still help us.

BEATRICE. I'm sure no one else can. When *will* Dominica be here?

SYMPHOROSA. We can't tell, she is motoring over.

BEATRICE. Why couldn't she have come yesterday? This beautiful summer day—and the saddest in all my life. Perhaps the most disastrous. Dominica is coming to ask Alexandra's hand for her son and I am waiting for her with tears in my eyes. (*Weeps.*)

SYMPHOROSA (*Embracing her*). Oh, my dear.

BEATRICE. What is Albert doing?

SYMPHOROSA. Sleeping.

BEATRICE. Fortunate man—and Alexandra?

SYMPHOROSA. She went out riding at six o'clock—

alone. I understand she came to your room last night after . . .

BEATRICE. At three o'clock. I wouldn't re-live for all the world those ten minutes during which she sat there—at my bedside.

SYMPHOROSA. Was she disrespectful?

BEATRICE. No, she told me everything. Everything that happened—from the beginning to the end.

SYMPHOROSA. And you?

BEATRICE. I simply died. I might as well have. My body turned to ice. I couldn't speak—I was paralyzed.

SYMPHOROSA. And she?

BEATRICE. She kissed my hand and left me. I haven't seen her since. (*Pause.*) That man—(*Rises, RC*). Is he still here?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, but——

BEATRICE (*Explosively*). Is he here?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, but——

BEATRICE. But! What kind of a "but" can excuse his presence here? (CHAMBERMAID *enters.*)

SYMPHOROSA. He is packing.

BEATRICE. Well?

CHAMBERMAID. Your Highness, the motor is coming up the drive.

BEATRICE. Motor!

CHAMBERMAID. We saw it from the window when it passed the lodge. There are two ladies in it.

BEATRICE. Now I start on my way to Calvary! Stay with me, Symphorosa, where is Hyacinth?

SYMPHOROSA. Out walking.

BEATRICE. I don't want to see him. I sent for him last night to tell him what I thought of his conduct.

SYMPHOROSA. And?

BEATRICE. He told me what he thought of mine. I hope he keeps out of my sight.

SYMPHOROSA. Why are you so angry at him?

BEATRICE. Because he was right.

(*Enter* CÆSAR.)

CÆSAR. Her Highness Princess Maria Dominica has arrived.

BEATRICE. We are coming. (*She exits quickly with* SYMPHOROSA. CÆSAR *exits. The doors remain open. Off-stage* VOICES *are heard in an exchange of greetings.*)

(DOMINICA *enters, with* BEATRICE *and* SYMPHOROSA. *She wears a motoring coat. Behind her comes the* COUNTESS, *who helps her off with her coat, hat, and veil and gives them to the* CHAMBERMAID, *who carries them off.*)

DOMINICA (*Continuing her conversation*). We left at four o'clock this morning. I don't like to motor by day in the summer—the heat is unbearable. We made wonderful time—over two hundred kilometers in less than three hours.

BEATRICE. Then you must have got up at——

DOMINICA. At half past two. Then you were still dancing. (BEATRICE *sighs.*) That's the third time you've sighed.

BEATRICE. I was thinking of my poor husband—and how fond he was of you.

DOMINICA. I was no less fond of *him*.

BEATRICE. Symphorosa, will you see that everything is ready? (*To* DOMINICA.) We didn't expect you so early.

DOMINICA. I didn't telegraph the hour of my arrival—motoring is so uncertain. But I don't mind waiting.

SYMPHOROSA. I'll make sure that you will be comfortable. (*Exits.*)

DOMINICA (*Sits*). It's such a relief to sit down again without having the landscape rushing past you.

BEATRICE. Would you like your breakfast now?

DOMINICA. No, thank you. We had some tea before we left. Oh, Countess— (COUNTESS *steps down.*) will you warn Count Lutzen not to wake Albert on my account? I don't want him coughed out of bed ahead of time. (COUNTESS *exits.*) I understand you were up late last night. You must have been entertaining Albert royally. That's what he likes. I can imagine how much he has enjoyed himself.

BEATRICE. He is so easily pleased.

DOMINICA. Don't be modest. I know very well what thought and care you must have given to entertaining him—and planning surprises for him.

BEATRICE. Surprises? Ah, we did what we could.

DOMINICA. And now, my dear, let us come to the point. You know what a woman I am for plain speaking. It isn't for nothing that in Vienna they call me the Cook.

BEATRICE. I——

DOMINICA. I am proud to be called that. But first of all, give me another kiss.

BEATRICE (*Rises*). Dominica!

DOMINICA. Beatrice! (*Stands up and kisses her, they sit again.*) Now—to business. Do I have to tell you what I am here for?

BEATRICE. Oh, Dominica!

DOMINICA. In a word, my son wishes to marry your daughter.

BEATRICE (*Rises*). Dominica!

DOMINICA. Beatrice! (*Again they stand up, kiss each other and sit down.* BEATRICE *cries.*) Why do you weep? Is it as sad as that?

BEATRICE. I am so overwhelmed.

DOMINICA. Then collect yourself. You must sooner or later make up your mind to it. His Majesty is more than pleased to approve the marriage. And I had a long wire from Albert yesterday, explaining that he did not dare to show how delighted he was with Alexandra until I came. You know he never commits himself without first consulting me.

BEATRICE. He is such a perfect son.

DOMINICA. Happy the people with such a king! Albert wrote that he was beginning to find his enforced silence very irksome and he begged me to come at once so that he could tell you how delighted he was and how happy he could be with her.

(*Both rise, embrace, kiss and sit down.*)

BEATRICE (*Rises*). Oh, Dominica!

DOMINICA. I am not surprised. Your daughter is truly beyond criticism—beautiful, intelligent and dignified. That's what I like about her—her dignity—her magnificent reserve.

BEATRICE. How sweet of you to say that!

DOMINICA. I mean it. I do not at all approve of the tendency toward freedom of manner, so noticeable in the younger generation. Fortunately there is not even a suggestion of it in Alexandra—one could not ask for more perfect stateliness and *aloofness*. In fact, she is, if anything a little too aloof—a little unnecessarily cold with her inferiors.

BEATRICE. Cold? You could hardly say that.

DOMINICA. But I told you that that was what I particularly admired in her.

BEATRICE. She has changed lately. She treats her inferiors almost warmly now.

DOMINICA. And so my husband's dream is fulfilled. For this marriage, you know——

BEATRICE. —was his one thought in life. (*Sighs.*)

DOMINICA. And I am happy to say that whatever obstacles there were to the marriage have been removed. Albert is free to follow the dictates of his heart. (*Sighs deeply.*)

BEATRICE. Now you are sighing.

DOMINICA. I know. I was merely thinking that the fact that Albert should have to marry for love is very little to the credit of my diplomats. Their

incompetency forced my son to rely on his own heart.

BEATRICE. But how much better for him.

DOMINICA. If you could only know what Albert has been through. First there was——

BEATRICE. I know—Helen of England.

DOMINICA. So you do know.

BEATRICE. I have always been a close follower of Albert's political history. Next, there was Charlotte of Dresden, the plump one.

DOMINICA. How considerate of you to be so well informed! After that, he went to Portugal.

BEATRICE. In all the July heat—Silvina Gonzaga —the ugly Infanta.

DOMINICA. Ugly? That doesn't begin to express it. There may be a word in Portuguese to describe her, but ugly is altogether too weak. And then the unfortunate episode of Maria Hermine in Brussels.

BEATRICE. Who was two heads taller than Albert.

DOMINICA. But how were we to know—they sent us only half-length photographs.

BEATRICE. I know.

DOMINICA. Is there anything you don't know?

BEATRICE. Since he was a child, I have watched over Albert as if he were already in the family.

HYACINTH (*Enters.* BEATRICE *rises and turns away.*) Ah, Dominica! I kiss your hand.

DOMINICA. Karl!

HYACINTH (*Goes to* BEATRICE *and kisses her on the forehead*). Good morning, Beatrice.

DOMINICA. Why——

HYACINTH. You are looking splendid, Dominica. (BEATRICE *sits.*)

DOMINICA. And you too—are you spending the summer here?

HYACINTH. No, only a few days. But don't let me interrupt you.

DOMINICA. You can guess what we were talking about. Here I am—need I say more?

HYACINTH. That makes me very happy. (*Takes her hand, sits.*)

HYACINTH. So you are taking our little girl away from us, Dominica?

DOMINICA. Yes, carrying her off without mercy. Is she still sleeping?

BEATRICE. No, she went out early for a ride.

DOMINICA. When may I see her?

BEATRICE. When may you see her? (*On the point of fainting, again. Rises.*) Oh, my head—Oh! (*She sways.*)

HYACINTH (*Forcibly*). Beatrice, I forbid you to faint again. It won't do you any good this time.

DOMINICA. What is it, my dear?

BEATRICE. Last night—at the supper—a little faintness . . .

HYACINTH. It was most inconsiderate of you.

BEATRICE. But——

DOMINICA (*Rising*). If you are really not feeling well . . .

HYACINTH. Of course she doesn't feel well. But

then, neither do I. However, that's no excuse for our fainting. Sit down. (BEATRICE *sits.*)

DOMINICA. What is the matter then?

HYACINTH. I shall tell you, Dominica. (*Motions her to sit, she sits.*)

BEATRICE. Karl! Karl!

HYACINTH (*Rising*). No—I am doing the talking now. Dominica—they say, and I know with truth, that you are the cleverest woman in Central Europe.

DOMINICA. Oh, Karl!

HYACINTH. Forget your modesty. You will require all your intelligence—Dominica—we have got ourselves in somewhat of a tangle. At least so Beatrice thinks—something has happened. (BEATRICE *sobs*).

DOMINICA. Not to Alexandra!

HYACINTH. I said you were the cleverest . . .

DOMINICA. Has anything happened to Alexandra?

HYACINTH. No—but almost.

DOMINICA. Gracious Heaven!

HYACINTH. Are you going to faint, too? Listen to me and I will tell you the whole story.

DOMINICA. Karl, how you frighten me!

HYACINTH. I am only trying to reassure you.

DOMINICA. Then tell me what in the name of Heaven has happened?

HYACINTH. Simply that during his visit here Albert has behaved himself like a fish.

DOMINICA. Like a fish?

BEATRICE. How can you say that, Karl?

HYACINTH. Could a fish be any colder or more dumb?

DOMINICA. Poor Albert, that was for my sake. You know that without me he never . . .

HYACINTH. How were we to know that? Least of all, Alexandra, who really cares for him. Naturally, his indifference hurt her a great deal.

DOMINICA. Was his indifference so marked?

HYACINTH. It couldn't have been more so. He may be a model son, but as a suitor he is a total complete, failure. However—however, everyone here worshipped your son—both the girl and her mother.

DOMINICA (*Throwing a kiss to* BEATRICE). Dear Beatrice. (BEATRICE *half rises.*)

HYACINTH. And in the midst of all this worship Albert acted like . . .

DOMINICA. A fish.

HYACINTH. Much worse. Alexandra could hardly sleep. She cried all night long.

DOMINICA. How terrible!

HYACINTH. We could not help noticing it. We had to suffer with her.

DOMINICA. We?

HYACINTH. Her mother and I and the boys—and the tutor.

DOMINICA. The tutor?

HYACINTH (*Mopping his brow*). We are coming to him now. He is the boys' tutor. A most clever, lovable young man. Well, things had come to such a pass that as a last resort, to pro-

voke Albert into showing at least some signs of interest, the Professor was invited to the reception—(BEATRICE *rises.*) God knows it was a stupid thing to do— (HYACINTH *looks at* BEATRICE.) but it only goes to show how extravagantly they worshipped your son.

DOMINICA. What a delightfully naïve idea.

HYACINTH. Wasn't it? (BEATRICE *sits.*) But then something happened that was not foreseen. It turned out that the Professor—this mild-mannered, earnest young scholar—was *secretly in love* with Alexandra.

(BEATRICE *rises LC. Brief pause.*)

DOMINICA. Of course that was to be expected.

HYACINTH. Of course. (BEATRICE *sits again.*) Remembering that he saw Alexandra every day, so gracious and beautiful—well, it's just the old romantic story.

DOMINICA. And then?

HYACINTH. Imagine the cruel suffering of this good young man, so pitifully in love, when he discovered his part in this innocent game was only to serve as a means to an end.

DOMINICA. Albert is to blame—why couldn't he speak out? There was no need for him to be so over-cautious.

HYACINTH. He did it for your sake, I don't think you know what a dutiful son you have.

DOMINICA. Of course, it is gratifying. Well, and then——

HYACINTH. And so the boy sat down to supper

with us—the martyr—there is no other word to describe him—this self-sacrificing martyr—and the agony he endured brought tears to my eyes.

DOMINICA. I don't blame you.

HYACINTH. And Alexandra—with her kind heart—couldn't bear to see him suffer either. She would have liked to have sent him away. But the Professor—merely out of loyalty to the family and to Alexandra—and to your son, too, for that matter, was determined to play the game out, in spite of his breaking heart.

DOMINICA. The poor boy.

HYACINTH. Until Albert, who of course knew nothing of what was going on—*insulted* him.

DOMINICA. The Professor?

HYACINTH. Yes, the Professor.

DOMINICA. That poor boy?

HYACINTH. That poor boy—imagine it.

DOMINICA. How did Albert insult him?

HYACINTH. He called him an intruder.

DOMINICA. How awful—why didn't you stop him?

HYACINTH. How could I?

DOMINICA. And the poor boy?

HYACINTH. What could he do? He bowed his head—I thought my heart would break.

DOMINICA. The brave fellow—and Alexandra?

HYACINTH. I knew you would be sorry for him.

DOMINICA. And Alexandra?

HYACINTH. If you could have seen him as he stood there, with his hopeless, desperate love—with his romantic dream so cruelly shattered—with his

heart torn and bleeding—while Albert, in all his perfect elegance, insulted him. And this boy stood there with his head bowed, humiliated, disgraced, all because of his loyalty to the family. I appeal to you as a woman—wasn't that brave of him?

DOMINICA. Very brave.

HYACINTH. Does such a man deserve to be sent away?

DOMINICA. No.

HYACINTH. Does he deserve to be insulted; to be disgraced; to be punished?

DOMINICA. God forbid.

HYACINTH. Doesn't he rather deserve to be—to be—how shall I say it—to be—I don't know myself—but doesn't he deserve to be——?

DOMINICA. To be kissed.

HYACINTH. Exactly what happened to him. (*Sits down, mopping his brow.*) But what a time I've had telling you.

DOMINICA. What? What happened to him?

HYACINTH. Just what you said—Alexandra kissed him.

DOMINICA. Alexandra?

HYACINTH. Yes—just as you said.

DOMINICA. As *I* said?

HYACINTH. Because she couldn't bear to see him suffer any more. She kissed him before Albert and me?

DOMINICA. And Albert?

HYACINTH. How could he know what it was all

about? He didn't grasp the situation as clearly as you have.

DOMINICA (*Doubtfully*). As I have—yes.

HYACINTH. And Beatrice—with her love of convention, her idolatry of form, sits there making herself positively ill over something that Dominica finds the most natural thing in the world. (BEATRICE *rises.*)

DOMINICA. Of course, of course.

HYACINTH. What a beautiful thing for Alexandra to have done. I am glad that she looked at the matter as you do. We must both bow to that girl. (BEATRICE *begins to recover.*)

DOMINICA. A noble, brave-hearted girl. (*Majestically.*) Happy the people with such a queen!

HYACINTH. And if you must know—I kissed him myself!

DOMINICA. Of course you did. The most natural thing in the world. (*Turns to* BEATRICE.) So this is your terrible calamity?

HYACINTH. It has quite exhausted her, but she was angry with the Professor—for another reason.

BEATRICE (*Quite reassured now.*) Not at all. I feel exactly as Dominica does. I have all along, but how was I to know whether Dominica would feel as I do?

HYACINTH. You were very angry with the Professor about Napoleon——

DOMINICA. You don't like Napoleon either?

HYACINTH (*Rising*). I should say she does not.

DOMINICA. In my husband's library there is a very

curious French book which clearly proves that Napoleon never existed. I shall send it to you. You will find it most comforting. So that's what your great plot came to. (*Rises.*)

BEATRICE (*Standing*). You dear understanding Dominica.

DOMINICA. The poor little tutor. He begins to interest me. What has become of him?

BEATRICE. He is packing. He felt after what had happened . . .

DOMINICA. His feelings do him credit. But are you letting him go without——?

BEATRICE. Well, you know, now he is rather like an exploded shell.

DOMINICA. But you should see that he leaves well provided for. Men in his position usually turn up again—they are likely to cause trouble when you least expect it. Let me talk with him.

BEATRICE. Thank you, my dear.

DOMINICA. I could have told you not to have anything to do with tutors. They are about as safe near Princesses as matches near a barrel of powder. Then, when may I see the tutor? (*Enter* CHAMBERMAID.)

BEATRICE. At once. Is everything ready?

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, your Highness. (*Exit.*)

BEATRICE. Tell Cæsar to come here.

(SYMPHOROSA *and* COUNTESS *enter.*)

SYMPHOROSA. Dominica, we are all ready for you, and there is a surprise for you in the next room.

DOMINICA. Another surprise?

SYMPHOROSA. But this will be a pleasant one. Albert is waiting to see you.

DOMINICA. Albert? Up so early—to see me? That *is* a surprise. I'll go at once. Have the tutor wait for me here.

BEATRICE. As you wish, my dear, but I warn you, you will not find him easy to handle.

HYACINTH. Let's bet she finishes with him in five minutes.

DOMINICA. I don't bet, Hyacinth. Not since 1896 when I bet with my husband that my next child would be a boy.

HYACINTH. And was it a girl?

DOMINICA. Two of them at one time. (*Exits L.* COUNTESS *and* SYMPHOROSA *follow. Pause.* HYACINTH *and* BEATRICE *look at each other.*)

BEATRICE. What a wonderful heart you have, Hyacinth. And not such a bad head, either. Now, the only thing I am afraid of——

HYACINTH. In Heaven's name, what now?

BEATRICE. When she talks with Albert—suppose he tells a different story?

HYACINTH. He won't—for two reasons. First, he is not such a fool as to disagree with his mother, and second, I shall be there. (*Starts to go.*)

BEATRICE. Oh, you dear—did I misjudge you so badly? What shall I do to be forgiven?

HYACINTH. Anything but fall on my neck. And tomorrow write in your exercise book one hundred times: "Old brooms sometimes sweep clean." (*Exit.*)

BEATRICE. No manners whatsoever. (CÆSAR *enters back R—she sees him.*) Cæsar, ask the Professor to come here at once and wait in this room. Her Highness, Princess Dominica, wishes to speak to him.

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness?

BEATRICE. What have you prepared for her Highness' breakfast?

CÆSAR. Cold salmon, cold roast beef, cold pork, cold——

BEATRICE. You must have lost your mind. That was last night's supper.

CÆSAR. So it was. There will be *another* breakfast, your Highness.

BEATRICE. What has come over you, Cæsar?

CÆSAR. I have not slept, your Highness, for me it was a night of torment—principally because of that cup of tea.

BEATRICE. Tea?

CÆSAR. My terrible blunder. Father Hyacinth got the hot tea and your Highness the cold consommé.

BEATRICE. I am glad of it. If it hadn't been for that cold consommé I might have fainted even sooner. Don't punish whoever it was who made that mistake.

CÆSAR. No, your Highness. (*Pauses.*) Would your Highness suggest giving him a little something as a reward?

BEATRICE. We won't go to extremes. The Professor is to wait here. (*Exits.*)

(CÆSAR *goes to door down R.* ALEXANDRA *enters.*)

ALEXANDRA. Has her Highness arrived?

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. Where is she?

CÆSAR (*Points to L*). In there, your Highness, I believe. Her son Prince Albert is with her.

ALEXANDRA. And what are you doing here?

CÆSAR. I was about to go where I was told to.

ALEXANDRA. Where were you told to go?

CÆSAR. To Professor Agi.

ALEXANDRA. What did they want of him?

CÆSAR. To come here and wait.

ALEXANDRA (*Sits*). Very well, send him in.

CÆSAR. But your Highness, the tutor——

ALEXANDRA. The Professor.

CÆSAR. They sent me for—the Professor—because her Highness, Princess Dominica wished to speak to him.

ALEXANDRA. Never mind why he has been sent for. Do what you were told.

CÆSAR. Yes, your Highness. (*Exits.*)

(*Short pause.* AGI *enters.*)

AGI. Do you wish to see me, your Highness?

ALEXANDRA. No, I simply heard you had been asked to come here and so I waited.

AGI. Your Highness wishes?

ALEXANDRA. I have not seen you dressed this way before.

AGI. I am dressed for traveling.

ALEXANDRA (*Facing front*). You are leaving?

AGI. Yes. Your Highness wishes——?

ALEXANDRA. What is to become of the boys?

AGI. That I don't know.

ALEXANDRA. Won't you be sorry to leave them?

AGI. Very sorry. Your Highness wishes——?

ALEXANDRA. Princess Maria Dominica, Albert's mother, has arrived.

AGI. I know.

ALEXANDRA. Do you know why she has come?

AGI. Yes, I know.

ALEXANDRA (*Pause, looks at him*). Will you sit down?

AGI. Thank you. (*But he does not sit.*)

ALEXANDRA. I have not yet spoken with the Princess, nor seen her; but I shall in a few minutes. Then she will tell me why she has come.

AGI. Yes, your Highness. (*Pause.*)

ALEXANDRA (*Rises*). Is that all you have to say?

AGI. That is all.

ALEXANDRA. Why must you speak so coldly now?

AGI. To express my very deep respect.

ALEXANDRA. Have you forgotten what happened —last night?

AGI. I have forgotten.

ALEXANDRA. Even when I——

AGI. Even that. I must forget—and your Highness must deny it—and he—he must not have seen it.

ALEXANDRA. I will not deny it, and he did see it. (*Turns back to him.*) It seems to me you took a very precious gift from me—perhaps a kingdom.

AGI. That is not so much—There was one offered once in exchange for a horse.

ALEXANDRA. Do you want to insult me?

AGI. No, your Highness. My action, my speech, my departure today—they are simply my answer to your Highness' kiss.

ALEXANDRA (*Turns away*). I didn't ask you to use that word.

AGI. What harm to name it? When the receiving was so much more painful.

ALEXANDRA. More painful than the giving?

AGI. Much more—Because I felt all the pity in it and the contempt. It was a little too condescending. It meant that I was not a man, but a child or a dog that you could pat on the head.

ALEXANDRA. Was that how you took it?

AGI. If I could have taken it in any other way.

ALEXANDRA. Then——?

AGI. I would have returned it.

ALEXANDRA. Then, in other words, it was a very stupid thing that I did.

AGI. It was a little too much, your Highness, too sudden.

ALEXANDRA. Too sudden?

AGI. We had not gone that far. But you did kiss me—and so I went out into the park, where the wind could clear my head. There my heart became quiet, and I could think once more—then I felt very much like a beggar who has had a thousand crown note cast into his hat and is half in-

clined to run after his benefactor, for fear it was a mistake.

ALEXANDRA (*Proud, nervous*). I am glad that now you see things so clearly.

AGI. It is the morning light, your Highness. The sun is shining.

ALEXANDRA. And not the stars.

AGI (*Turns away*). No, no, not the stars.

ALEXANDRA. I am very glad. It is well as it is.

AGI. It could not be better. (*Pause.*)

(HYACINTH *enters.* AGI *bows.*)

HYACINTH. At last I have found you. The Princess Dominica wishes to speak with you—and also the Prince.

AGI. The Prince?

HYACINTH. He would be very happy if he could make amends—for last night's misunderstanding.

AGI. Forgive me, Father—but I should like to be excused from the interview. I am on the point of leaving—they have put my things in the carriage.

HYACINTH. You would leave without saying good-bye?

AGI. I have just taken my leave of her Highness.

ALEXANDRA. A very strange leave-taking.

HYACINTH. How strange?

ALEXANDRA. Cold and defiant—as if I had sent him away.

HYACINTH. Now isn't that remarkable? A second time he has anticipated my thoughts. You did send him away, my child, by hurting his pride and

his self-respect—with that condescending little kiss. That's it, isn't it, my son?

AGI (*Facing him*). Yes, Father.

ALEXANDRA. Such a tragic moment—and you talk of a kiss—(*Comes to* HYACINTH.) And all that he said last night—his talk about life and death and the Unknown—didn't he mean any of that?

HYACINTH. I wouldn't say that. Deep suffering requires strong language. That explains profanity.

ALEXANDRA. So that was what it was.

HYACINTH. That's a great deal, my dear. It's an indication of the fiercest grief—a cry from the heart in which the words don't matter.

ALEXANDRA (*Turns away*). Then what words of his shall I believe?

HYACINTH (*Goes to her, arm around her*). The words he's left unsaid. Now, my dear, how about yourself? Tell me the truth.

ALEXANDRA. To tell the truth, I think—I love him a little.

HYACINTH. I thought so too until you kissed him.

ALEXANDRA. Do you say that too? What do you both mean? Was the whole world turned topsy-turvy last night?

HYACINTH. No, dear.

ALEXANDRA (*Facing* AGI). Do you feel the way he does?

AGI. Yes, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. But——

HYACINTH. My dear, you don't know what you

want. Last night it was pity you were looking for, and at exactly half-past two you found it in that bitter kiss.

ALEXANDRA. Bitter?

HYACINTH. Yes, I could tell—even though I didn't receive it.

ALEXANDRA (*Her head on his shoulder*). I am very sad, Hyacinth, but when you talk to me—don't you suppose you could stay on a little longer and talk to me some more? It comforts me so.

HYACINTH. I'll stay, my dear, for three days—four days if you want.

AGI. Will you permit me to leave? (*Bows.*)

ALEXANDRA. I marvel at your calmness, your self-control. But I know it's not real the way you are acting today. You would like to act quite differently.

AGI. Perhaps, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. You would like to speak in another way.

AGI. No, your Highness.

ALEXANDRA. Where was this self-control last night? I would like to know that?

HYACINTH. I'll stay a week.

ALEXANDRA (*More and more nervous*). If you can be so calm now, why did you act as you did last night? What was it you wanted then? (*Turns to* HYACINTH.) I'm sure I don't know.

AGI. Nor do I. That was the most beautiful thing about last night—I didn't know what I wanted.

ALEXANDRA. You didn't know?

AGI. No.

ALEXANDRA. You didn't know!

HYACINTH. I'll stay two weeks.

ALEXANDRA (*With growing excitement*). He didn't know what he wanted! And yet he went right on. He played upon my kind-heartedness, my inexperience—so that he carried me along through it all—and I was ready to go with him—even in his defiance—to the end of the world—and he—— (ALBERT *enters L.* ALEXANDRA *sees him, but pays no attention to him.*) He didn't know what he wanted. (*Speaks to* ALBERT.) He only wanted to destroy things—to give way to the excitement of the moment. You called him a rebel—you should have called him a rebellious child.

ALBERT (*Lightly and ironically*). You judge him unjustly—he is a free spirit—he is not like us.

ALEXANDRA. All he wanted was to defy us—to make a scene—he had no decency.

ALBERT. You forget, he is an astronomer.

ALEXANDRA. And now I say his behavior was presumptuous.

AGI. Your Highness.

ALBERT. Not a word, Nicholas, I forbid you. (*Goes to him, puts his hands on* AGI'S *shoulders and kisses him.*)

HYACINTH. I'll leave tomorrow. (GEORGE *and* ARSENE *enter. Each carries a bouquet of flowers in his hand. They pause a moment on the*

threshold, then come down centre where they stand embarrassed.)

GEORGE. Professor—— (*Gives* AGI *flowers; so does* ARSENE.)

AGI (*Taking flowers*). For me?

GEORGE. Yes.

ARSENE. Yes.

AGI (*Between boys*). Can these be the savages—the famous savages? Well, (*To* ARSENE.) let us say good-bye happily. Cheer up—(*To* (GEORGE.) no more history lessons. Now we must, then, make way for history itself. (*Bows to* ALEXANDRA *and all and exits.*)

GEORGE (*Looks after* AGI *and runs off after him, calling protestingly*). Professor!

ARSENE (*Also calls protestingly and follows* GEORGE *off*). Professor! (*They exeunt.*)

ALBERT. Don't be angry, Zara. I owed him that.

ALEXANDRA. Owed him?

ALBERT. For the kiss you gave him last night. (ALEXANDRA *looks at* HYACINTH *piteously.*)

HYACINTH. Yes, he is right.

ALEXANDRA. Then I didn't commit any terrible blunder?

HYACINTH. That would hardly be possible—to one of your exalted rank.

ALEXANDRA. Then I wasn't a heroine?

HYACINTH. No.

ALEXANDRA (*Rising*). What was I then?

HYACINTH. Don't ask me that.

ALBERT. Alexandra! Last night you righted a

wrong that my weakness made me commit. I would like to ask you to stay by my side always so that when I make a mistake again you will be there to—to act as bravely as you did last night. Will you? (*Takes her hand.*)

ALEXANDRA (*After a short pause*). Albert, I must be truthful with you. If I say that at this moment I feel nothing more for you than respect—and friendship——

ALBERT. Then I will say that that is quite enough for me.

ALEXANDRA (*Sadly*). This is hardly a love match.

ALBERT. No, no—decidedly not.

ALEXANDRA. No.

HYACINTH. No.

ALBERT. I would like to say this——

ALEXANDRA. Yes.

ALBERT. We have something even finer—the love which comes after marriage. That deep and abiding happiness which—which——

HYACINTH. Comes later and lasts longer.

ALBERT. Extraordinary how you can express exactly what's in one's mind.

(*Enter* DOMINICA.)

ALEXANDRA. Welcome, Aunt Dominica. (*Kisses her hand.*)

DOMINICA. What has become of the Professor?

ALEXANDRA. He was here.

DOMINICA. And——?

ALEXANDRA. He went away. (*Long pause.*)

DOMINICA. Why are you all so silent? (*Another*

pause during which BEATRICE *enters followed by* SYMPHOROSA.)

BEATRICE (*Looking around at the silent company*). Merciful Mother! Now what has happened?

HYACINTH. The Professor was kissed again.

BEATRICE. By whom?

HYACINTH. By Albert.

BEATRICE (*Relieved*). Oh.

DOMINICA. Are you taking turns at kissing the Professor? He must be a remarkable man.

HYACINTH. That he is.

BEATRICE. Did you kiss him too?

HYACINTH. Last night.

DOMINICA. Then it won't be necessary for me to speak to him—he has been sufficiently rewarded.

BEATRICE. If he's still here—perhaps I ought to kiss him, too.

DOMINICA. That will not be necessary. (*Turns extended hands to* ALEXANDRA.) My daughter!

ALEXANDRA. My dearest Aunt, if you deem me worthy——

DOMINICA. Worthy in every way, my dear daughter. (*Kisses her.*) But with this one word of advice—remember hereafter that your dear father used to call you his Swan. Never forget that—and think always of what it means to be a Swan. You may glide proudly, superbly over the smooth surface of the lake—but you must never approach the shore. For when the swan tries to walk, when it waddles up the bank, then it painfully resembles another bird——

ALEXANDRA. A goose?

DOMINICA. Exactly, my dear. The nature books teach us that the Swan is no more than a very haughty duck. So it must stay out on the lake—be a bird, but never fly; know one song but never sing it—until the end. So for you, my dear daughter, the unruffled waters of the lake—there you must remain—with your head high, oblivious of the crowds along the shore—and the song, never. (*Pause.*)

(CÆSAR *enters.*)

CÆSAR. Breakfast is served. (*He pulls back curtains so they may pass through.*)

(HYACINTH *proffers* DOMINICA *his arm. Next goes* BEATRICE *and* SYMPHOROSA, *alone. Then* ALBERT *and* ALEXANDRA, *arm in arm. They exeunt.* CÆSAR *strides majestically after them.*)

CURTAIN